INFOTECH / B2-2

Microsoft pilots VoIP remittance service in RP

ENTERTAINMENT / E1

American Idol's Randy Jackson looks forward to new 'dogg pound'

BUSINESS / B2-1

MBA graduates have functional skills but firms look for leadership

METRO / A25

Leviste aide was shot not once but several times, say officials

Canadian sitcom shows funny side of Muslims

TORONTO—THE CREATORS OF A NEW CANADIAN sitcom, "Little Mosque on the Prairie," are hoping the TV show will strike a chord beyond the country's borders as it portrays Muslims in a new light—funny.

The comedy, about a small Muslim community in the fictional Prairie town of Mercy, aired on Canadian television this week to mostly favor-

CANADIAN A22

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, January 15, 2007 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 38 P18 inquirer.net

Study uncovers truth about lies in workplace

LONDON—OFFICE WORKers are most likely to tell the truth in face-to-face communication and with colleagues they are close to—and most tempted to lie by e-mail, a recent British study revealed.

STUDY A6

TRADE DEAL: Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing (from, left) and Philippine Trade Secretary Peter Favila shake hands as they exchange documents on Asean-China trade during a signing ceremony at the 12th Asean Summit in Cebu. Witnessing the signing are Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Philippine President Arroyo. »

TRILATERAL MEET: Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (center) smiles warmly as he welcomes South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun (left) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe before their three-country "trilateral" meeting on the sidelines of the 12th Asean Summit of Leaders and its Dialogue Partners in Cebu. »

China, Asean move closer to free trade

Region rising as formidable bloc–GMA

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Volt Contreras

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo yesterday expressed satisfaction at the outcome of the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit and said the region was on the road to becoming a formidable bloc building millions of secure and prosperous communities from East to West.

Fueling the President's optimism was the signing of a free trade pact with China at the start yesterday of the 10 Asean leaders's two-day meetings with each of six regional counterparts that also welcomed India's "Look East" policy and urged North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

The agreement between China and Asean, a key market for Chinese manufacturers as well as a source for energy, calls for improved market access and a higher level of investment in the region, especially in computer-related services, real estate, construction and energy services.

The meetings come a day after Asean completed its own annual gathering of leaders, vowing to strengthen political solidarity, fight terrorism and create a free trade zone by 2015.

"For all of Asean's great efforts, it is payback time for a region whose legacy to its

CHINA A28

"SINULOG" festival dancers perform in front of the Magellan Shrine for the visiting spouses of the Asean country leaders who are attending a summit in Cebu.

Capiz sees potential market in China

More stories on Pages A6, A13, A28

WHILE SHOPPING CENTERS IN Cebu stock Chinese products ranging from toys to televisions sets and clothes to refrigerators, entrepreneurs in Capiz have found China a potential market for their raw fabaga, coconut products and milkfish.

Trade between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has surged, totaling $160.8 billion last year, a 23 percent rise over 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said yesterday.

The full-year 2005 figure of $130.4 billion was roughly 16 times that of 1991.

Wen was speaking at a summit with Asean in which the two sides signed an agreement set to give another boost to economic exchanges.

In July China will open its lucrative services sector to Southeast Asian firms in sectors that include energy, telecommunications, real estate and information technology.

"This marks a key step forward for the establishment of a China-Asean free trade area," Wen told Asean leaders before the signing.

The free trade zone—which would be the world's biggest, covering nearly 2 billion people—is set to come into force in 2050.

"This should round out the liber-

CAPIZ A28

Energy security tops agenda of East Asian leaders' meet

By Volt Contreras

CEBU—WITH THE TWO-DAY 12TH Asean Summit over, the larger East Asia Summit (EAS) opens here today with the Philippines having the call as host to set the agenda. How 16 neighboring countries can cooperate to ensure energy security.

For about seven hours, leaders from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and dialogue partners Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, India and New Zealand will be meeting only for the second time in the EAS.

The inaugural EAS was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005, also as an adjunct to the Asean summit chaired by Malaysia.

The EAS serves more as a "forum" and not really as an organization, and countries attending it are more accurately referred to as "participants" rather than "members," a Filipino diplomat explained to the layman.

EAS commitments are thus made in broader strokes and with long-term strategies in mind, compared to the more specific or immediately functional initiatives of the Asean, the official added.

President Macapagal-Arroyo will open the EAS at 5 p.m. at the Cebu In-

ENERGY A12

GMA calls for release of Suu Kyi

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

CEBU—WITH SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADers asserting primary responsibility for handling Burma (Myanmar), President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday urged Burmese military leaders to free opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and take "concrete" steps toward democracy.

Ms Arroyo, during a closed-door meeting with Burmese Prime Minister Soe Win on the sidelines of the Asean summit Saturday, expressed the hope the conviction of Suu Kyi's house arrest in May last year "would be the last."

She said Burma's engagement with United Nations envoy Ibrahim Gambari was encouraging but such visits must yield "more concrete and meaningful results" in the future.

Her comments to Soe Win, as reported in a document made available to reporters, were stronger than the official position of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In their post-summit statement, Asean leaders encouraged fellow member Bur-

BMA CALLS A12

Public bidding urged in ₱930-M AFP radio deal

AN ANTICORRUPTION COALITION HAS urged the Department of National Defense to conduct a public bidding for the purchase of 12,000 VHF/FM radios worth ₱930.8 million under the Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program.

The Coalition Against Corruption (CAC), a regular observer of biddings at the DND, submitted its proposal on Jan. 11 to Defense Assistant Secretary Roberto Nagal, chair of the DND bids and awards committee.

The proposal came after an ₱60-min special report said that the purchase of the radios had been stalled for three years and had adversely affected field communications because the DND and AFP still had to resolve whether to buy them by direct contracting or by a public bidding.

The CAC is composed of business and Church groups and several nongovernment organizations, and is headed by former Central Bank Governor Jose L. Cuisia.

The Government Procurement Policy Board earlier recommended that the radios be bought through public bidding. However, the AFP now under Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, has stood firm on direct contracting.

The DND's defense acquisition committee and its bids and awards committee

PUBLIC BIDDING A6

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Palace said backing Chavit for Senate

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE COUNTRY'S GOVERNORS AND MAYORS are aggressively pushing for the senatorial bid of controversial Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, whose inclusion in the administration slate is reportedly being given serious thought by Malacañang.

SINGSON

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, in an interview with the Inquirer, said local government officials were out to prove that their growing influence on national politics was "no fluke."

"We showed how potent local government officials were in helping the President ride through the storm of her political crisis. We want to show in the elections that a united force of governors and mayors can arise to play kingmaker by campaigning for one of our own in the senatorial race," Evardone said.

Stating the meeting of the League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) on Friday, Evardone said, the 82 members unanimously called for their chair, Singson, to join the administration's senatorial slate.

Singson, however, said he had yet to make up his mind about running and doing battle against senatorial hero handpicked by his former ally, current President Joseph Estrada.

Materializing quickly showed its interest in talking to one of the more powerful local government officials on the administration ticket. The lineup is deemed the underdog in the coming polls as recent mock polls showed the administration bets will be whipped by likely opposition candidates.

In a text message to the Inquirer, Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio said: "Governor Singson carries a long and rich, not to mention colorful, experience in local government that may be tapped as a vital reference point for legislative deliberations and actions in the Senate.

"Chavit can effectively articulate and represent the sentiments of local government units and officials nationwide, particularly those from the countryside."

Claudio added: "I believe he can be a significant asset to the Senate. His inclusion in the lineup is being given serious consideration by the leadership of the administration coalition which is in close consultations with him and will also take into account his own personal preferences in the matter. The final ticket will be decided on ratified by the administration coalition which consists of several political parties."

He also acknowledged the role played by local government officials in the Arroyo administration.

"The opposition should not doubt or wonder about the administration's confidence of victory in the senatorial polls nor should they continue deluding themselves about their own dismal chances," said Claudio.

Evardone said the governors and mayors could be the deciding factor in the midterm elections, adding that he believed that united incumbents were a cinch to retain their posts and that they would likely spend more time campaigning for candidates for Congress.

With governors and mayors opting to focus their resources on the coming elections, Evardone said, the LPP vowed to call for the deferment of moves to change the Constitution until after May.

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Be discerning of poll candidates, CBCP head urges faithful

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) yesterday urged the faithful to be "watchful and vigilant" now that the election season culminating in May had officially begun.

"People should be watchful and vigilant. There should be more discernment," Archbishop Angel Lagdameo said in an interview with the Church-run Radio Veritas.

The Jaro, Iloilo, prelate called on the faithful to intensify discussions that would indirectly look at the candidates. He said this method would help voters determine if those seeking public position would really work "for the good of the country."

The CBCP will also release a set of guidelines during its plenary assembly later this month. The new document will cover areas such as "voter attitude and what to do in light of the elections."

The plenary assembly, which is held twice a year, will officially begin with a seminar on Jan. 23 culminating with a meeting on Jan. 28. The gathering will also allow the different commissions of the CBCP to update the entire body on their individual programs and concerns.

Another prelate expressed concern on the possibility of "jueteng" money again being used in the coming elections.

"It is an open secret that elections in this country are anything but altogether honest, orderly and peaceful," lamented Archbishop Oscar Cruz, head of the advocacy group Kinasanlang Bayan Laban sa Jueteng.

The Lingayen-Dagupan prelate vowed to fight against candidates who were known promoters, financiers or operators of the outlawed lotto-piso illegal numbers game industry.

Stating money tribes some elections officials, past for campaign expenses, buys votes," he said. "[It] takes away votes from the candidates and makes the entire exercise in favor of corrupt and corrupting personalities politicians."

Cruz earlier said his group would go to the extent of actually campaigning against candidates with known links to the underground lottery business.

"It is not enough that these individuals are already well known by the general public," he stated yesterday in his web blog. "It is necessary and important that something is made to have them well studied."

Cruz said the group would also tell the public which candidates are against jueteng and "fit for the reason of public office."

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Ex-CJ Davide named RP envoy to United Nations

By Nikko Dizon and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

CEBU—A RETIRED SUPREME Court Chief Justice and Aquino ally of this province took his oath yesterday as the country's new Permanent Representative to the United Nations, grabbing some of the limelight in the ongoing 12th Asean Summit here.

Hilario Davide Jr. was sworn into the plum diplomatic post by President Macapagal-Arroyo, minutes after he arrived at Mactan International Airport.

The 71-year-old Davide's release appointment has yet to be confirmed by Congress, is set to succeed Lauro Baja, also a political appointee who has held the post since Feb. 2001.

The oath-taking ceremony was held shortly after the Arroyo emerged from the Asean-South Korea meeting at the Shangri-La Mactan, Lucaran added.

In an interview with reporters yesterday, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo said Davide was "very qualified" for the job.

"There is no question about his qualification. In 1986, another Estrada Chief Justice, Claudio Teehankee, was appointed Permanent Representative to the UN and he served up to 1988. He (Davide) is very qualified just like the late Justice Teehankee. His presence will enhance the national interest in the UN," Romulo said.

The appointment of Davide, whose term as Supreme Court chief justice ended in December 2000, is seen as a reward for his support for Arroyo's ascension to the presidency in January last year.

Davide administered the oath to Arroyo when the latter took over the presidency from Estrada in the wake of the "people power" revolt that ousted the latter from Malacañang.

Davide was also the chief magistrate when the Supreme Court issued a temporary restraining order on the impeachment trial of Estrada in November 2000, thus paving the way for the filing of plunder charges against the former president.

Davide's appointment is also seen as a way to reward Cebu for its support for Arroyo in the May 2001 presidential elections.

Cebu was the only province outside Metro Manila where Arroyo won in the May 2001 presidential elections.

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Opposition slate may see Erap, Cory sons together

By Michael Lim Ubac and TJ Burgonio

WITH ONLY ONE OR TWO slots still up in the air, the political opposition hopes to announce its unified 13-man senatorial ticket this week which will see the son of deposed President Joseph Estrada together with the son of former President Corazon Aquino running together against the Arroyo administration.

According to House Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano, the common candidates in the short list being drawn up by the United Opposition (UNO) and the Senate's Third Force are Senate President Blas Ople, Senators Francisco Tatad, Juan Ponce Enrile, Ralph Recto, Teofisto Guingona Jr. and Edgardo Angara, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero, Representatives Cayetano and Arnulfo Fuentebella, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Tarlac Governor Jose Yap and Ilocos Sur Governor Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Sen. Loren Legarda and Rita Santos, and San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito.

The 12th slot is still subject to hard bargaining negotiations. Cayetano said it could go to former Sen. John Osmeña due to a "personal commitment" by Estrada, the de facto leader of UNO.

"These are the candidates that we have so far," said Cayetano, explaining that re-elected senators were picked because of the principle of "equity of the incumbent."

Cayetano admitted that problems may still arise if opposition candidates that were not included in the magic 12 decided to run, referring to Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile and former senator and Vice President Teofisto Guingona III.

"There will be an inside problem if Johnny runs because everyone agrees that he should be on the slate," said Cayetano. "Enrile, I don't know if anyone can bring her room well be made for him if he also decides to run."

The early losers in the opposition primary are former Senators Francisco "Kit" Tatad, Georgie "Gringo" Romanos and actor Rudy Fernandez.

With the inclusion of Aquino and Ejercito in the slate, it's apparent that former Sen. Teofisto Aquino Guingona and Sen. Loren "Lol" Ejercito have given way to their much younger kin.

Sen. Loren "Lol" Ejercito Estrada confirmed she isn't seeking a second term. "The President doesn't want me to run anymore. In fact, he had once remarked that he'd rather have me as his campaign," she said in an interview last Friday.

The low-profile former first lady, 56, has calmly accepted her husband's decision. "Whatever he wants for me, that's fine by me. I won't be where I am now if not for him. It was him who had to run for senator then. Besides, as he had intimated, I'll be spending more time with him when I'm out of the Senate," she said.

Defensor: I can roll with punches

...RU PROPOSAL TO SEEK TEMPORARY freedom for deposed President Joseph Estrada was ridiculed and ridiculed by his own allies but Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor still sat back down to drop his subject.

Defensor said yesterday President Macapagal-Arroyo as well as religious and business leaders were supportive of his proposal to temporarily release Estrada from house arrest.

"I know I will be subject to ridicule and many comments but that's still my consideration," he said in a phone interview.

"I can roll with the punches," he added.

Allies of the Arroyo administration, including Estrada himself and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, chided Defensor for proposing a matter that they said was best left to the courts to decide.

The other day, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio joined the chorus, asking Defensor—who is supposedly resigning for senator—to stop raising the proposal for his own political ends.

Defensor denied making the proposal because he was after the so-called Estrada vote in the coming elections.

He reiterated his belief that Estrada's continued detention was the "root" of the political bickerings and divisiveness in the country, which was affecting both the people and their leaders.

Reconciliation with Estrada was part of the 10-point agenda of President Arroyo, he stated. *Christine O. Avendaño*

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Protesters, including kids, stopped near Asean venue

CEBU CITY—ONCE MORE, activists were stopped from staging a major protest here.

Some 30 activists, including children, swam yesterday in the Mactan Channel in an attempt to get close to the Shangri-La Mactan Resort and Spa, one of the venues of the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit.

The activists were able to swim 300 meters from the shore of Barangay Punghol in Talisay City before they were prevented from going any further by heavily armed maritime police and members of the Philippine Coast Guard.

On the shore, some 200 fishermen staged their own protest, waving placards that read, "Scrap the Asean-multinational pact," "Junk the Japan-Philippines economic partnership agreement," "Defend our seas," "Give the Philippine fisheries sea of MTCC" and "Justice for all victims of political killings."

Also yesterday, members of the party-list group Bayan Muna and allied groups such as the Panaghiusa sa Gagmay'ng Mamumugo sa Sugbo (Pasaka) took to the streets and burned a flag of the United States, while coastal Coast Guard and maritime authorities watched from their own rubber boats.

Clemente Bautista, of the environment group Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, said the symbolical protest was meant to oppose the signing of the Asean environment accord and support the call to scrap the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

"We condemn the signing of the environment accord because this would only lead to more political repression and political killings. We believe in junking the VFA because under this agreement, more servicemen are being allowed to enter the Philippines," he said.

Gary Corpuz, Pamalakaya's information officer, said the VFA would allow the US to exploit the Philippines as its staging ground for war against the Moslem people. "It is not an unfortunate part; it is a terrorist part ... allowing the US to perform new counterinsurgency techniques in military intervention in the region."

Fernando Hicap, chair of Kalikasan and one of the 30 who swam off Tungkop yesterday, said they needed opposite economic agreements signed by Asean leaders than scandal benefits only a few and adversely affect the marginalized workers. Aurora B. Balmeo and Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

Spoiled food downs Asean dancers

CEBU CITY—SEVENty-five dancers preparing to perform for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and other Asian leaders last night were downed yesterday morning by food poisoning, but the show will go on, according to organizers.

The dancers were brought to three hospitals in Cebu City early yesterday morning, complaining of stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhea after they ate pancit, a Philippine seafood noodle dish, said Dr. Susana Vilchez-Ho, regional director of the Department of Health in Central Visayas (DOH 7).

The dancers were rehearsing last night at the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort and Spa during the gala night, the end-of-summit program for the Asean Summit, according to a source in the Cebu organizing committee.

Dancers, led by Senadora Nur Lee Sinsuat, will serenade the VIPs with hits from "Les Miserables" and "Phantom" at the banquet, hosted by President Macapagal-Arroyo, sources for-pantheon, Inquirer Visayas

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THE fireworks display was put up by the Chinese team last night. KOSHIROSUO

Drilon: GMA bullying foes with dismissal

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. FRANKLIN DRILON YESTERDAY AC-cused the Arroyo administration of "bullying" the opposition after the Department of Labor Secretary and Local Government ordered the dismissal of a number of opposition local executives, including Iloilo Gov. Neil Tupas.

"This is even worse than martial law," Drilon, president of a Liberal Party faction, said in a statement defending Tupas, an ally. He said Tupas was being dismissed on graft charges without a formal investigation.

Tupas is a member of the LP National Executive Council, the party's highest policy-making body.

A DILG official had said the Ombudsman had also ordered the dismissal of suspended Pasay City Mayor "Peewee" Trinidad, nine other suspended Pasay officials and Juan, Nueva Ecija, Mayor Trinidad Suppleo on graft charges.

The Ombudsman also recommended the suspension of Batangas Gov. Armando Sanchez on similar charges.

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United Kingdom wins World Pyro Olympics

THE UNITED Kingdom's spectacular fireworks display beat nine other countries to win the Grand Championship of the 2nd World Pyro Olympics held in Pasay City last week.

The international fireworks competition lit up the skies over Manila Bay on four separate nights, from Jan. 5 to 13, and drew huge crowds to the reclaimed bay area and Roxas Boulevard.

The United Kingdom's entry was judged the best based on variety and quality of shells, audiovisual impact, composition and choreography and overall design. Team UK, which presented its display on Jan. 7, was composed of Matthew Spencer and Neil Sims representing Wheretoget Fireworks.

China, the last competing country to fire up the skies Jan. 13 last night, was given a special award for technical excellence and precision. Team China was composed of Pyrotechnic Wu, Gu Song Yu, Kawk Tark Sau and Jeffrey Mou representing Chotoss Fireworks group.

Other countries that participated in the 2nd World Pyro Olympics included Australia, Poland, the United States, Spain, Germany, Denmark and Canada.

The Philippines, represented by events organizer La Mancha Pyro Productions, was not a competitor but just the same entered the crowd with its own world-class fireworks show at the end of the competition.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 15, 2007
2nd Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Heb 3:1-19
Gospel: Mark 2:1-22

One day, when the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were fasting, some people asked Jesus, "Why is it that both the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but yours do not?" Jesus answered, "How can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them and on that day they will fast.

"No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old coat, because the new patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth, making a worse hole. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the skins and then both the wine and the skins would be lost. But new wine, new skins!"

Commentary:

Jesus offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to God, and God heard him because of his reverence. And He learned obedience through what he suffered... being human. Animal, dying, life-like blood was given for sin and so he is the right priest. We are Jesus' disciples and we both celebrate in life and pray. There is a time for feasting and a time for fasting; a time for working in the presence of the bridegroom Jesus who teaches, heals, touches, and eats with us; and a time for grieving his absence, which is the time we find ourselves in. The time of fasting is the time we live in. And since it is the time of yearning now left into the hands and all peoples. Do we live as the others and live as the priests of God?

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Public bidding urged in P930-M AFP radio deal

From page A1

ion had recommended to Arroyo-Cruz shortly before he resigned as defense secretary in November the purchase of the units through a negotiated procurement.

Scenarios

The CAC, through the Makati Business Club and Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, reiterated in June 1, 2005, position that a public bidding would enable the government to realize substantial savings.

While acknowledging the AFP's concern to ensure that the new units would be compatible with the 1,950 units it had bought earlier, the CAC noted that the 12,000 remaining units to be procured represented more than six times the original order.

In a "best case scenario" of a public bidding, the same supplier for the 1,950 units may win again but at a lower bid price, the coalition said in a statement.

In a "bad case scenario," another supplier offering a different radio may win, making the first set of communications equipment inaccessible to the new set, the CAC said.

But the coalition said the 1,950 radios could be used just for specific areas so AFP units while the rest could be used anywhere. The AFP would then have two radio systems.

Suggestions

Bracing to solve procurement problems reported by the bidders, the CAC recommended the following measures in the bidding of BND and AFP contracts:

+ Project preparation must always be clear and unbiased in writing project specifications and favoring any specific supplier, manufacturer or even a brand.

+ Project management teams or technical working groups should do good market research to facilitate the decision at the BAC level.

+ To enhance transparency in the bidding process, a master timetable for all procurement of supplies in any agency should be readily available to the public.

The coalition also called on the government to "prosecute erring ... to complete the cycle of procurement reforms in any agency."

The group also urge the Ombudsman to act judiciously on all pending cases related to procurement law violations, especially the Commission on Elections and e-Mega Pacific bidding scam," it said.

The Comelec had paid P1.3 billion to the Mega Pacific consortium which was judged by the Supreme Court to be ineligible, and the government has not recovered its down payment.

In October last year, however, the Ombudsman cleared all Comelec officials of any wrongdoing. — Frances Chua, contributor

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ET ENTER TECH

Study uncovers truth about lies in workplace

From page A1

The level of truthfulness is heavily dependent on the means of communication, according to the study.

Specifically, most lies are told by e-mail, then by phone, and finally in one-on-one contact.

"People think it is less moral to lie to those they feel close to, and may also fear that such people are more likely to detect any lies," Shalini Misra, who conducted the study at the University of Central Lancashire, told Agence France-Presse.

Overall, the research found that workers were untruthful in some way in up to a third of all interactions, with those described as "professionally distant" found to be most likely to lie.

In 1% percent of all communications, respondents admitted to actually lying.

The most common forms of lying were the distortion of information, withholding information, providing deliberately ambiguous information or changing the subject in order to deceive.

Office managers could learn much from the research that was formally presented last week, its authors said.

"Managers may be wise to encourage bonding activities in order to develop psychological ties with their employees themselves and their subordinates and also within all employees," said Vilnis Sloka, the coauthor of the study.

But the authors lamented that such issues were not always a top priority.

"Companies are currently busy cutting back because of downsizing, and team building is one of the first things to go," Sloka said.

She also suggested that the considerable number of lies told in the workplace may be related to changes in the job market.

"Because there is less job security than several decades ago people are under a lot more pressure at work, and may try to manage this pressure with lies," Sloka said. AFP

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References
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OFW recruiters threaten to quit over gov't rules

By Leila B. Salaverria
RECRUITMENT AGENCIES ARE threatening to shut down their operations and hold up the deployment of hundreds of thousands of domestic helpers abroad if the government prohibits them from charging "placement fees," along with other stringent new requirements.

Recruitment watchdog Migrante-Overseas said more than 800 agencies bringing domestic helpers to neighboring countries like Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan are protesting the new rules of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, which they say are "so restrictive that it would be better not to deploy domestic helpers overseas at all."

Aside from abolishing placement fees, other new requirements of the POEA are the hiring of at least monthly salaries of domestic helpers, from $200 to $400, increased minimum age, from 21 to 23, and additional training from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.

These new rules, he said, are meant to improve the stock of the country's domestic helpers and turn them into "supermaids."

On placement fees, Goolasi said recruiters in Hong Kong and Taiwan had existing agreements with local recruitment agencies and were required to pay "brokers' fees" to secure contracts for domestic helpers from the Philippines.

With the no placement fee policy, the agencies would not be able to pay the brokers' fees, he claimed.

The increased minimum wages and training requirements, they said, would make Filipino domestics more expensive to hire. Less absorbing women in many sending up to get helpers from other countries or this may give rise to illegal recruitment, they warned.

These agencies sent 120,000 domestic helpers to neighboring Asian countries in 2006, he added.

Goolasi said recruitment agencies are appealing to labor officials to defer the implementation of the generic rules, so as not a cross-frame for their slow implementation to give them time to make adjustments.

On the other hand, overseas job applicants have complained of exorbitant placement fees charged by some recruiters. Officials had also noted that overseas workers, particularly those who were very young, were vulnerable to abuse.

Senator Pimentel Jinggoy Estrada wants overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to be provided with regular counseling services in view of the increasing number of violent incidents and crimes involving them.

The latest victim was a 47-year-old Filipina domestic helper in Hong Kong who reportedly committed suicide by jumping from the 41st floor of the apartment building where she worked.

"I understand that the Department of Labor and Employment sends social workers to help distressed OFWs. I just don't know if they do that on a regular basis, which I think they should, and not only when problems arise," said Villar, vice chair of the Senate foreign relations committee.

Some of those arrested are prominent personalities of the crimes, Villar said, citing the case of a Filipino priest who admitted killing her maid, a young boy, in Kuwait. Other high-profile incidents included the case of Jane Lagumbay who was killed by another Filipina, Gaye Aguilar, in Singapore, and Evy Bonifacio who was killed in Jeddah, Spain.

PhilN reports from Cecilia Balanovsky Arroyo Aning

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End of Abu seen with app't of new military chief

By Alcuin Papa

ALL HOPES THE NOTORIOUS Abu Sayyaf terrorist group will be finally neutralized soon even as the president of a new military commander in Sulu, the military leadership said yesterday.

Philippine Army spokesperson Maj. Ellemer Tuvera announced that the appointment of Col. Antonio Supaad as the commanding officer of the 104th Brigade based in Sulu province.

Tuvera described Supaad as "a well-rounded officer" to take charge of ongoing operations against the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah regional network operating in Mindanao [illegible], which has ties to Osama bin Laden's international al-Qaeda terror network.

Tuvera said the military was "not only expecting more encounters but also operations until the surrender of more members of the two terrorist groups" with the designation of Supaad.

"The Brigade has a deep appreciation of his area of responsibility. He knows the people well, he knows the enemy and the terrain. He is a good leader. He is a disciplinarian," Tuvera said.

He added that another of Supaad's strengths was his being a lawyer, for which he was expected to do everything "by the book."

"He will have a strong impact on the military operations in the area. It [his appointment] will have a big impact against the Abu Sayyaf, JI and other lawless elements. He is a good officer," Tuvera added.

Supaad, whose last assignment was as commander of Task Force Zamboanga, replaced Col. Bernardo Dolasco, who was given another Army brigade to head in the Visayas, forces said.

Before his assignment to Zamboanga, Supaad was chief of staff of the now defunct Southern Luzon Command. He had also headed the Anti-Crime Task Force of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, an elite unit based in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Supaad's appointment came as the military had begun implementing "Operation Plan Ultimatum," which is aimed at neutralizing key Abu Sayyaf and JI leaders believed to be hiding in the island province of Sulu.

Ground operations to hunt down the terrorists have been going on carried out by Philippine Army and Marine Intervention Support Unit units.

The Marines figured in an encounter with the Abu Sayyaf in Bohol, Indis, in September which purportedly led to the death of the terror group's chieftain, Khadaffy Janjalani.

DNA samples taken from the encounter are now being studied for verification by forensic experts from the United States and the Philippines in the US.

Police reshuffle still on

THE PHILIPPINE National Police is standing firm on its plan to reshuffle 37 provincial and city police commanders around the country even as pressure and government vowed their opposition to the new assignments.

PNP Director General Oscar Calderon said the new police chiefs assumed the posts vacated by officials who had completed their two-year tours of duty.

In a statement yesterday, Calderon said the new commanders "will ensure a clean slate and fresh start when the governors on June 30 and barangay officials on July 15, which has ties to Osama bin Laden's international al-Qaeda terror network.

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MICROTEK

Pinoy priest in US led double life

By Jocelyn Soliman, Inq. Virginia—A Filipino Catholic priest suspected of stealing more than $600,000 (almost P30 million) from two churches was living a double life as a family man in a neighboring county according to court documents.

The 50-year-old Rev. Rodney L. Bodie, who had been living in the United States since 1991, was indicted earlier this week on a felony embezzlement charge. If convicted, he could face up to 20 years in prison.

A document included in papers concerning Bodie to jail listed him as living with a wife and three children in Fredericksburg, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported Saturday. It was not clear whether Bodie, ordained a priest in the Philippines in 1980, was the children's father.

The Catholic Diocese of Richmond was surprised to hear about Bodie living in Fredericksburg, diocese lawyer William Etherington said, at least neighbors in the subdivision where the family had lived for a number of years.

Neighbors said Bodie—who lived with a woman he referred to as his wife and three children—ranging in age from about five to 10, still then to was in the airport-repair business. They said he was often gone for days or weeks at a time.

"I did think there was something strange," said Ilieg, who used to live next Bodie. "He was always vague about what he did."

The Spotsylvania County real estate assessment Web site listed Joyce Hilliard as the owner of the house, and neighbors said Bodie' wife's name was Joyce.

The diocese hire Francis S. DiLorenzo, bishop of the Richmond Diocese, had suspended Bodie's activities, meaning Bodie is not allowed to represent the diocese or perform priestly duties.

Bodie, still a citizen of the Philippines, was pastor at St. Jude Catholic Church and Immaculate Conception Catholic Church since 1993, before then he served as the parochial vicar at St. Mark Catholic Church in Virginia Beach for one year and then chaplain at Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News for another year. In May he retired due to health problems.

An investigation began in November after church officials found that a donation to the parishes had not been recorded. Bodie allegedly set up a separate church bank account, in which he transferred some donations meant from September 2001 through December 2000, Etherington said.

Bodie appeared in London General District Court on Thursday where he agreed to surrender his passport as part of an agreement in which his bond was reduced from $100,000 to $10,000.

John Williams, a member of Immaculate Conception, said Bodie was the best priest he had ever known and that he couldn't imagine Bodie in jail or leading a double life.

"I never heard one negative word about Bodie," Williams said.

Neighbor Bob Fagan said Bodie was diligent about his yard and that the family seemed nice.

"I figure the people in charge are the ones to sort out and the legal issues are being sorted out for him," he said. AP

Pay hike still up to wage boards

MALACAÑANG INSISTS THAT ITS TRIPARTITE regional wage boards make the decision on the demand of private sector workers for a wage hike because this could best balance the interests of workers and employers, it said yesterday.

Differently showing down the specter of a legislated wage increase for organized labor, the Palace expressed confidence that labor, business and the government institutions concerned "would be able to find a middle-ground on wage issues."

"We need to strike a balance in according to our workers their due and, at the same time, protect the survival and stability of enterprises," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

Bunye pointed out the tripartite regional wage boards "so far have been sensitive to this balanced objective."

He reminded the public that, for its part, the government had never failed to ensure that workers benefited from "socioeconomic, non-wage benefits."

This included preserving the workers from surges in the prices of basic commodities and the crowding of social services in check.

The House of Representatives has approved a bill that seeks to grant a ₱125-wage increase to minimum-daily wage earners. The Senate has yet to act on the measure. *Christine G. Avendaño*

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GMA calls on Burmese rulers to release Aung Sa

From page A1

...to to "make greater progress toward national reconciliation." They called for the release of the...

...takeover but did not name the democracy leader.

Mr Arroyo also said Burma should consider the desire expressed by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to be consulted by the government, and added that "dialogue and compromise should be encouraging process."

The President said there was "tremendous concern" in the international community about the 63-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner, and expressed hope that her request for more regular meetings with international envoys would be granted.

Positive developments

Mr Arroyo also noted the positive developments in recent months, including a decline in the number of rapes filed against individuals lodging lawsuit labor complaints against the government.

Son Wie, according to a diplomatic source, explained his country's "road map" to democracy and what he termed internal problems. Rights groups say the "road map" is a sham to entrench power in democracy.

Reporting on the Yangon issue, Mr Arroyo said that the summit had agreed on the need to "preserve Asean's credibility as an effective regional organization by demonstrating a capacity to manage important issues within the region."

She said Asean duly noted Burma's implementation of its road map to democracy but it exercised to "encourage it to make greater progress toward national reconciliation."

"We called for the release of those placed under detention and for the effective dialogue with all parties concerned," she said.

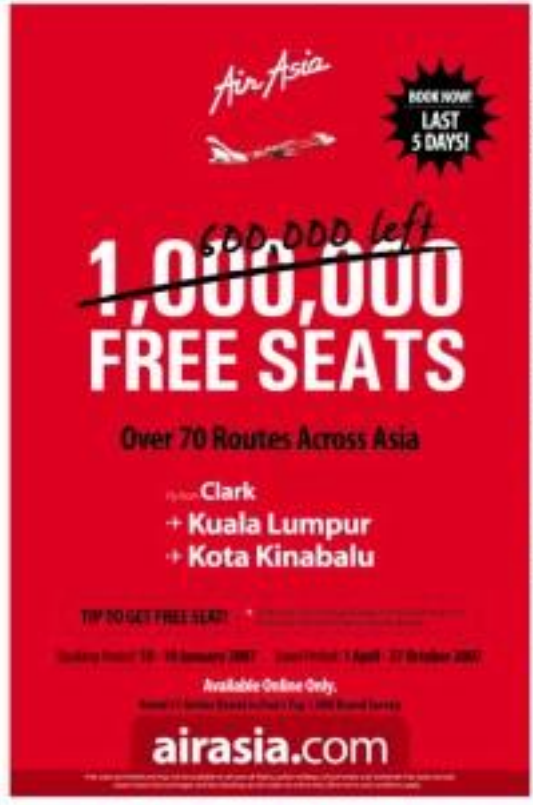
Asean's proposal to shift to a rules-based like with the ratification of a new charter is widely seen as a means to put pressure on members such as Burma that do not toe the organization's line.

Burma escaped a possible sanction from the UN Security Council after China and Russia vetoed a US resolution moving for the release of an estimated 1,000 political prisoners in the country.

PP offer of help

In a possible change of policy, Asean leaders offered to help Burma deal with humanitarian problems, including the displacement of people by rural insurgencies and diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, Associated Press reported.

Mr Arroyo offered her country's help to advise Burma on how to deal with displaced vil...



AFTER unveiling the Asean Grove (background), Presidents Arroyo (fourth, from left) and his daughter Luli Cojuangco, Ivana Ong, India's First Lady Gursharan Kaur, Thailand's Crown Princess Chavalit Yoodchanok Sirivannavari Nariratana, Brunei's Pengiran Isteri Hajah Mariam binti Pengiran Haji Abdul Rahman, Singapore's Mrs Ho Ching and Vietnam's Mrs Nguyen Thi Hoa pose for a photo session at the Banaybay Talamban in Cebu City.

Energy security agenda of East Asian leaders' m

From page A1

...ternational Convention Center. At noon, the leaders are expected to sign the Cebu Declaration on Energy Security.

"When first held in 2005, the 16[illegible] countries decided to intensify regional cooperation in five areas of concern—finance, education, health, natural disaster mitigation and energy security.

The Cebu meeting would be the first time that the summit would have a "focus"—energy—in contrast to the "free wheeling" nature of the earlier Kuala Lumpur talks, the diplomat explained.

Regional fuel stockpile

With the host having the prerogative to choose the agenda, Mr Arroyo picked energy as this year's topic since it is widely considered the most vital issue today both for the host country and the region, and where cooperation could be most easily achieved, the official added.

The leaders will examine the possibility of a regional fuel stockpile along with other possible ways of boosting oil reserves, according to the draft of a statement. They will also work toward freer trade in biofuels and a standard on biofuels used in engines and cars.

The draft, which was approved earlier by foreign ministers, also calls for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions but offers no regional targets, unlike

n Suu Kyi

Leaders say Korean soaps 'rock'

By Rob Cuaresma

CEBU—AS MUCH AS THEY WORLD leaders wanted to chat in the more exotic locales, South Korean gathered here apparently couldn't help but convey a shared sentiment of their peoples to South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun: Those Korean "telenovelas" rock!

The matter unexpectedly came up in yesterday's meeting between the transition of Korean Asian Summit and their top guest from Seoul, according to Ambassador Ric Lozada, spokesperson of the 12th Asean summit.

"There was talk around the room of movie-inspiring urban stars called 'soft powers,' the popular influence of Korean culture accomplished by the growing popularity of Korean television dramas," Lozada said in a briefing, recalling from his "home" of the meeting.

Latest to an interview, Lozada explained that the leaders of Malaysia, Singapore, "and I think even (then-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo) could remember about it, that it is enjoying a huge following."

Notwithstanding the shared cultural affinity, the popularity of Korean soaps in his native country and their attendant leader formed to "be more as well," Lozada added.

The fun part was among the rare light moments to leak out of the closed door meetings held at the Shangri-La Mactan, which was largely sealed off to media save for some pressmen and photographers.

As the Philippines, Korean media, Asian state relations to the period epic "Jewel in the Palace," have been dominating primetime TV for the past few years, even spawning prequel videos for fans who can't wait for

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OPINION

Your online feedback: express up-to-the-minute happenings in EDSA (Online) or CBD (Online)

Hunting Usman

EDITORIAL

COULD THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT have done something to stop the coordinated series of bombings that shook the cities of General Santos, Kidapawan and Cotabato last week? Perhaps; perhaps not. But the fact that the question itself is being asked, even by those who have long supported peace negotiations with the separatist movement, means only one thing: These acts of terrorism, by ostensibly creating a sense of urgency, do not help the peace talks. Instead, they undermine the public goodwill without which no negotiated settlement can succeed.

We do not mean to say that the MILF was behind the bombings. And we do not mean to suggest that Philippine security forces do not bear any responsibility for the failure to link enforcement and counter-terrorism that allowed the bombers a free and deadly hand. They certainly bear the brunt of it.

The police director of Central Mindanao was right in ordering the police chief of Cotabato City immediately after the bombing on Wednesday night, pending investigations, the police chiefs of General Santos and Kidapawan also have some explaining to do.

Even more to the point: The chief of staff of the Armed Forces, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, was doubtless right when he said the bombings had embarrassed him and the government. The explosions, occurring one after the other in a five-hour period, were timed for maximum international impact: They were all on the eve of the 12th Asean Summit, at a time when senior ministers from the 10 Asean member states and dozens of foreign correspondents were already congregating in Cebu. The bombs claimed seven lives, and injured more than 50 civilians or victims.

Here are two more reasons to be (deeply) embarrassed.

The men who the Armed Forces believes carried out the bombings, Usman Basit, has been involved in other terrorist attacks, including bombings in two towns; and, in April 2002, the bombing of a department store in General Santos, which killed 15 people and injured 64 others. In other words, Usman is not an unknown quantity but a known terrorist.

He is also a fugitive on the run, because he was arrested in July 2002 but escaped after three months. How did he escape, why does he remain at large after more than five years, who is he and what makes him tick: these and similar questions remain essentially unanswered. Even though he was detained for three months, all the AFP said it knows about him was that his brother, an Islamic cleric, was killed in an encounter with troops several years ago.

Embarrassing? Downright inexcusable.

None of this, however, justifies the MILF's lukewarm response to the recent bombings. One would think, listening to their official spokesman, that the MILF sees no urgency to the peace talks—or cannot conceive of a connection between these acts of terrorism and public support for a peace agreement.

"We are willing to help arrest them (the bombing suspects) based on the conclusions of the peace talks," political affairs chief Ghadzali Jaafar said. Tumbleweeds: We'll wait for the government to formally petition us.

After denying the AFP claim that Usman was a former MILF commander, spokesman Eid Kabalu added: "We are investigating our ranks, but I am repeating, we did not have anything to do with the attacks. We are engaged in talks with the government and we have agreed in the past to help out hotspots in stopping foreign terrorists."

How about home-grown terrorists? There's the rub. Police officers believe Usman is living somewhere in the Lanao blank, which they describe as an "MILF area." It is difficult to contemplate the possibility that Usman can continue working in parts of Mindanao—glittering with the Abu Sayyaf bandit group, or perhaps smarting bomb material for the radical fundamentalist Jemaah Islamiyah—without the MILF getting wind of his activity.

Perhaps they would like to share their intelligence? Usman's capture would help restore some of the lost credibility of the peace process, and strengthen the hand of those on both sides of the negotiating table who want a peace agreement, and soon.

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Can Lagman be in two places at the same time?

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THIS IS A CONTINUATION OF LAST FRIDAY'S column on the conflicting claims about the distribution of relief goods in Tabaco, Albay in the wake of typhoon Reming. For those who missed it in his, here is a background.

It started when I wrote here that Resilience was complaining that while they were suffering from the ravages of the typhoon, their congressman, speaker Jose Prospero Pichay, and Sen. Villafuerte, instead of helping them, were in Manila trying to railroad the constitutional amendment through the House of Representatives. Lagman wrote that he was actually flying back and forth between Manila and Albay to distribute relief goods.

Then came the information, published in a letter column, that relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development and Mlft rice were repacked in plastic bags stamped with the name of Lagman's daughter Cielo in preparation for the mayor of Tabaco, Dobleo, when were distributed to evacuees. The deeds and political opportunism angered Engr. Roman C. Temporal who refused to accept the relief goods.

Lagman wrote another letter identifying Temporal as a "political enemy" and complaining that the latter failed to file a letter in the MTRCB to request that I publish it in the "interest of truth and honesty."

The first part of his letter was published last last Friday. This is the second part:

"Vice Mayor Dodie Dobleo Lagman claimed in his letter to be acting supposedly in Mamagpon Tondo, purely in the chair of our Parish Corporation Ministers of Holy Communion and he has actively served our parish community long before I became parish priest of Tabaco. And besides, during the typhoon Reming, Dodie was the City Mayor of Tabaco when the City Mayor was not around.

"At the height of the typhoon, we coordinated to shelter us in the church and its pastoral center hundreds of evacuees, seeking them from danger and peril. Where was Lagman's Grace Poblete to help us? Where was Dodie Dobleo to distribute relief goods collected from donors, including Cebu, and the church premises has become the scene of relief distribution in the city to various groups, NGOs and numerous private donors. Nobody has been excluded, except in the case of that shameful Dec. 6 episode. Numerous generous private persons and groups have placed their trust in our system since sometimes is monitored and the intention of the donor is respected.

"3. And finally, story of justice. Lagman is anxious me, as Catholic priest, of being prejudiced in favor of the Church. What does he expect of me, borrow my Church? Transport it like private school property for me and my daughter for authoring bills on family planning which are vehemently opposed by the Catholic Church, Lagman wrote, here, during his daughter's stint in Congress, she authored the proposed Reproductive Health Bill, Cong. Bill, which many refer to as the "abortion bill in disguise." Here, Lagman is one of the main proponents of the so-called 'two child policy' But the point is not my personal belief on such issues. The stand of the Philippine Catholic Church on the matter is known to all. And I am happily in full communion with the Catholic Church, otherwise I have no business being a Catholic priest.

"I was here in Tabaco, Albay when Reming destroyed our life and land. Since the typhoon, priests have celebrated and presided with our suffering parishioners (Where was Lagman?) I believe that here in Tabaco City our priests and lay workers were able to save many lives and avoid thousands of others.

"Mr. Cruz, Lagman has accused you of 'erroneously' reporting. For us here, you saw clearly what some refused to see and still wouldn't want others to see. The well-appreciated generosity of others to us victims of Reming has been muddled by political and self-serving interests of some powerful locals. In fact, so many other questionable and scandalous acts by Tabaco's best not to be brought to the knowledge of those who are clueless."

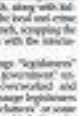
Monsignor Temporal ends his letter with a jibe at Lagman's claim that during Typhoon Reming, he was both in Manila (mostly) in Senate deliberations helping railroad the Con-Ass and in Albay "helping his constituents." "Take this from a priest," said Monsignor Temporal, "Ubiquitous, the capacity to be in two places at one time, has been reported when/or happened to only very few saintly persons. And according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, claims of bilocation are best treated with a healthy attitude of skepticism. God bless you and your noble profession."

The trouble with Lagman is that, despite the fact that it is impossible to be in two places at the same time, unless one is a saint (which Lagman definitely is not), he still cannot decide whether he wants to live in Albay or in Quezon City. Several years ago, he decided to run for congressman of Quezon City after serving for years as congressman of Albay. The reason is that his daughter got married to someone who was then a doctor of Albay. He was defeated resoundingly in Quezon City, to be reelected in Albay (it was his fifth congressional seat, the position he is occupying now. He is grooming his daughter to be mayor of Tabaco. A reinstated salesman of Sta. Ellen Lagman, Jr. is a councilor of Quezon City. You can see his banners (advertising himself) pollution the city. He has even (may have) usurped the attention of the workers of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) who were tasked to remove illegal signboards.

Several months ago, the old man Lagman (the father, not the son)—although he is a congressman of Albay, not of Quezon City—made a group of Quezon City residents his constituents and invited a pull-out to help them regain a big chunk of the U.P. Diliman (Ayala) which used to be inside into a residential subdivision. Are the Ellen, sans media guessing mugging congressman, or Albay's or Quezon City?

Lapses

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

JOSETO GILONGA IS KIND. HE ALLOWS FOR Court of Appeals Justice Apolinario Bruselas leaving inside an unwitting mistake in interpreting eminent American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes. "All would like to think that Justice Bruselas roughly regarded his justice did not deliberately misquote Holmes ... it remembers or another annotator for this particular case might be the source of the distorted or falsified quotation ... that Justice Bruselas, an expert in criminal law, should qualify to hold responsible for the offense of falsification."

The quote in question is this. Holmes had said: "Great constitutional provisions must be administered with caution ... [A] court be remembered that the legislature is the ultimate guardian of the liberties and welfare of the people in quite as great a degree as the courts." Bruselas quoted the second sentence as: "It must be remembered that the other branches of the government are ultimate guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people, too."

A trifling matter? Well, it was on the head of that pin that Bruselas stood his justification for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo having the authority to spring Lieut. Gil Trinidad from jail and deliver him to the Senate. If the executive, which is one of the branches of government, is also so much a guardian and arbiter of the liberties and welfare of the people as the courts, then GMA is well within her right to exercise judgment—however she is prone to lapses there—in the detention of Trinidad.

But Bruselas in fact said nothing of the kind. He said the exact opposite. The executive has no business meddling in the administration of penal, constitutional provisions. As Solonga points out, for the particular instance Oliver Holmes uttered those comments, he expressly forbade the state governor and his aides from having anything to do with the case.

Could Bruselas have made an honest mistake? Well, how is that possible? Bruselas must have literally known to have none of the honesty and all the mistakes. He was under pressure to find a justification, however flimsy, to rule the thing out of public interest, not least Neoliex, over the Venezuelan government of a wretched record. The kind GMA used to put to death, along with kidnappers, to some gems with the local and crime groups, and she dumped her talk, scrapping the death penalty, to score points with the international community in turn.

Now it is possible to charge "legislators" into "the other branches of government" unwittingly. An underpaid, overworked and sleep-deck-of-cards might change legislators into "consumers," or "researchers" or some such to go to print with it to support his ruling. For his plight, but he is not likely to confuse "legislators" with "other branches of the government." And in any case, it's the easiest thing in the world to run digital age to cut and paste, delete and add, or put the to quotes to assure you didn't quote anything.

Could it have been a researcher or associate who led him the wrong quote? Well, to begin with, there is such a thing as command responsibility, a doctrine which says you are responsible for the actions of your people. Though that is a concept that seems to elude us Americans and political activists are being slaughtered all over the place, a scale of mayhem comparable only to Marcos' time, and the temperature say we are not nothing to support the Chief Executive to the are very cheap executives. But that is another story More than that, you are going to have your justification for a matter of such importance as that quote and your word? Bruselas' justification is extraordinary. Because Bruselas got to be highly regarded by his peers, as Solonga says, if true, it doesn't reflect well on the quality of mind of his peers.

Solonga says that for the crime, Bruselas stands to reap "severe vigor of up to 10 years' imprisonment." The Lolo sounds formidable and almost irresistible. But I myself think that Bruselas will be punished most severely only in the sense we say that Virgilio Garcillano was punished most severely. For engaging in a long distance conversation with the President [she was still as at the time], in a voice as distinctive as hers, for denying it subsequently with the coolness of a hundred cowgirls by his side in the witness stand [I mean, I'm not what you think. ...], and for calling the whole world a liar for insisting he had fled the country to avoid arrest when he was here all the time. Garci has been severely punished by having Mahalaxmi's blessings to run for congressman in his home town. I wouldn't be surprised if Bruselas is severely punished by being shoved near the head of the line for Supreme Court justice, and his successors given prosecution.

It really is time for us to find out we're doing congregating with others countries, or even leading even like the mass conference with its unlikely presumptions of leadership and guidance. It's not just the blind leading the blind, it's the blind leading the seeing — or, more to the point, the deaf leading the seeing — on issues to expend. The abovementioned, the disappearances—of moral scruple in this country is astounding. Other countries aspire to become the best, we aspire to become the worst. Other countries aspire to reach greater heights, we don't mind hitting even the lowest depths. It used to be we were content only with world-variety. It was enough that we got by with the least effort. While others made love and war, we just made do. Today, we're not just content with mediocrity, we're made our peace with perfidy.

Other examples call deliberate efforts to mislead the public treason, we call it governance. Other countries call stealing the vote a crime, we call it a legal tool. Other countries call people who do those things traitors, we call them president of a republic and justice of the court of appeals.

Court packing

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

THERE IS NOW ONE VACANCY IN THE SUPREME Court resulting from the appointment of Justice Reynato Puno as Chief Justice. There will be another vacancy on March 16 when the mandatory retirement of Justice Jose Vitug takes effect. Since the President has filled three vacancies, the Court, in terms of numbers, will be dominated by President Macapagal-Arroyo's appointees. I emphasize "in terms of numbers" because dominance in the constitutional sense does not necessarily mean unanimous vote (though, being appointed myself, I do necessarily mean being subjected).

I recall the case of the late Justice Cecilia Muñoz Palma. At the time when she was being considered for appointment to the Supreme Court, older was there in the Court of Appeals—she visited me in my office, which was then in the Ateneo Law School along Padre Faura, and she told me that one qualifying question she remembers being asked was whether she was loyal. Well, I suppose she was loyal to the President who appointed her, but she never surrendered her independence. Her Supreme Court opinions attest to that.

I have never attended a hearing motivated by the Judicial and Bar Council where prospective appointees to the judiciary are interviewed. Nor do I know how sharp and searching the questions from the JBC members are. But the issue of presidential or partisan loyalty, which is distinct from ideological positions, is something that is very much a valid area for inquiry. The Court must be composed of persons who will be independent. And it is the solemn duty of the JBC to do everything needed to make sure that the Supreme Court, as its title signifies, remains supreme.

It might be good to recall a moment in the history of the Federal Supreme Court of the United States when it was fundamentally reconstituted. President Roosevelt's quarrel with the Supreme Court, however, was not about partisan politics but about ideology. Franklin D. Roosevelt's attitude toward the Supreme Court's stone wall during his first term, when his New Deal of social and economic reform could not pass muster before the conservative Court dominated by conservative old men. His heroism rose then again 75% in 1937 and his youngest was 61. Under the US Constitution there was, even in term, no retirement age.

To neutralize the power of the old men, Roosevelt drafted a bill to reorganize the judiciary. The bill called for all justices over 70 to retire, and should they fail to do so, the President would be authorized to appoint another justice to sit in tandem with each justice older than 70. For the Supreme Court, it would have meant that the President could appoint six new justices.

The proposal was denounced from the beginning. It was opposed by both political foes and friends, and by conservatives and liberals alike. The draft bill died.

Biographers of Roosevelt agree that his worst political blunder was his misreading of much of the political capital he had won in modern election-it-in-ites. It also weakened his war against poverty. But eventually the Court's social philosophy underwent change. In the end, too, the final winner was the American people. With the emphasis (injection of the most puzzling answer, no similar plan has ever been presented again.

Roosevelt sought to achieve his court packing scheme through Congress. I have never heard of anything like it being presented to the Philippine Congress. But there was a time when the President could pack the Supreme Court as well. Under the 1973 Constitution, the President alone decided who should go to the Supreme Court. So, too, under the Revolutionary Government which took over after the ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos. Chief Justice Enrique Fernando was the last Chief Justice Roberto Concepcion who proposed the alternative which we now have. Appointments to the judiciary not only be made from a list of at least three nominees presented to the President by the Judicial and Bar Council.

Here it is being asked how effective the JBC is or can be in ensuring the nation that the recommendees for appointments are the constitutionally independent choices and not those of the President.

Consider the composition of the JBC. It is chaired by an ex-officio Chief Justice. Other ex-officio members are the justice secretary and a representative of Congress. Four other members are appointed by the President with confirmation by the Commission on Appointments: a representative of the integrated bar of the Philippines, a law professor, a retired Supreme Court Justice and a representative of the private sector. Expeditiously the council operates under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

It is said that the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. How would you rate how the appointing process has performed so far? How will it continue to perform?

Is there good news about Filipinos?

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalban II

APPARENTLY THERE IS. AND THIS IS according to a foreigner and frequent visitor to this country. In the midst of Metro Rail, who talks about good Filipino qualities that are probably so ordinary to (and, therefore, taken for granted by) us, but not to the objective eyes of a non-Filipino observer.

"Open Letter to Filipino Catholics" is being passed around by the internet. It is the response to an Ateneo alumni e-group, from where prodigious e-Chief Marichu Bautista-Cortes forwarded it to my mailbox. Marichu told me I would not be the first to write about Raj's open letter. A few days before, I saw it in Marichu's, so I published it in the editorial another paper.

Among Raj's many best-selling books are "Crossing the Threshold" (his conversion story), "Up on This Rock" (on the papacy), and just recently "Jesus: Prophet, Priest, King" (on Christology). Quite prolific and controversial. Raj is also currently doing a 10-part video series titled "Footprints of God." The first two parts he saw: "Pearl, Keeper of the Keys" and "Mary, Mother of God" (now available in the Philippines).

Raj is not a Filipino. However, I must take exception to Raj's reference of us as a "Catholic nation." We are not. To say that we are effectively upon on the identity of the millions of Filipinos who are Muslims and who belong to other Christian denominations and religious groups, and although we are predominantly Catholic, many of us—the majority, it seems—do have like Catholics in name only.

Nevertheless, Raj, in his "Open Letter" gives us something positive, for a change:

"We support it into the church world around and a bit dark. Ideas had one began and we are toward the hour. We didn't know what to expect here in Manila, Tolbay. I guess we supposed it to be a modern Rome, but quiet and modern it was not. I thought I heard angels joyously singing behind me.

"The voices were rich, melodic and beautiful. What I discovered as I spun around to look did not surprise me because I had seen and heard the same thing in other churches around the world, it was not a choir of angels with feathered wings and halos but a group of delighted, typical Filipino Catholics with smiles of delight and joy on their faces as they worshiped God and sang His praises. I had seen this many times before in Rome, in Israel, in the United States and other countries.

"Filipinos are a special people and I love them. Often expressed as I guess at the happy throng getting ready to God. What are the special traits which characterize these happy people? I will share a few that I have noticed, for my travels around the world, including visits to the Philippines.

"First, there is a sense of community of family. These Filipino Christians did not sit apart from each other in different states. They are together, closely. They didn't just sing quietly mumbling, but really expressing the words. In fact, they put their voices to harmony together, as though they enjoyed the sense of unity and relationship among them. They are family even if they are not related.

"Second, they have an inner peace and joy—one in the world today. Most of the other world's citizens are worried and fearful, I have found Filipinos to have joy and peace, a deep sense of God's love that overshadows them. They have problems, too, and many that the Philippines have but many of the good things others in the world, yet there is still a sense of happy-ness in God and love of neighbor.

"Third, there is a love for God and for his Son Jesus that is almost synonymous with the word Filipino. There is also something that Filipinos are famous for around the world—their love for the Blessed Mother. Among the many Filipinos I have met, the affectionate title for Mary I always hear from their lips is 'Mama Mary.' For those guilty-feeling, Mary is not just a theological idea, a first century person, or a statue in a church. Mary is the mother of their Lord and their mother as well, their 'mama.'

"The Philippines is a Catholic nation—the only such nation in Asia—and this wonderful country has been blessed by God in many ways. The people also have to be stewardwise, use official workers of the church. So, they are workers and administrators, doctors, nurses and housekeepers that go to other lands and meet in the far reaches of the earth. They are witnesses for God's love and His Son's Gospel of love wherever they go. They take a comfort Mass public when they leave their own land. They could be the pagan of life as they always keep the love of Jesus and the Eucharist central in their lives.

"My hope and prayer, while I am here in the Philippines, sharing my conversion story from Baptist Protestant to former Catholic, is that the Filipino people will continue to keep those precious qualities. I pray that they will continue being Christ-centered, loving the Catholic Church, loving the Bible, loving Jesus, His Mother and the Eucharist.

"As many other religions and now-yes to persuade them to leave the Church, may God give them the wisdom to defend the Catholic faith. As they are challenged to grow in and with only love my and home and prayer, may God grant them the serenity to always remember that obedience to Christ and love for God is far more important than all the riches the world can offer.

"May the powerful Filipino people continue to be a light of the Gospel to the whole world!"

* * *

Comments to montal@ue.edu.ph

A policy of panic

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

IN HIS MEMOIRS "A STORM FOR THE FOREIGN," Benigno Macapagal recounted that as he took on his role in the foreign service during the Quirino administration, he was unhappy with only 4 as our country's independence day. It caused "considerable inconvenience" for Philippine missions abroad (possibly because foreign diplomats were up to 11th-century forms of gaining access or that don't. Put bottom, he felt July 4 "was too important enough ... since it enabled mostly the powerful independence relations to the United States."

Like all politicians, he convinced the pragmatic foreigners into amending the Philippines' diplomatic calendar—on July 12 with the obligation the mission to mark the transfer from the left, which looked to 1898 and 1946). What he lacked, though, was a power to count his inclination into policy. "The specific question," he recounted, all to the point, "was whether the Philippines should formally repudiate precluded Philippine independence under the aegis of a dictatorship or Jan. 21 before the Mission Congress ratified the protocol." Instead, "time when to make the change."

The "opportunity came when [the] House of Representatives rejected the $73 million additional war payment bill on May 8, 1950. There was indignation among Filipinos. There was a loss of American goodwill ... though this was at, among) just by the nonratification of the action. Macapagal was to want the president's position, I was committed to obtain the agreement of Kennedy to defer [and] some time for another time," Macapagal added. (Diosdado IV, 1992; Macapagal "confided an urgent to Congress the enactment of a measure to do [sic] unanimously as independence day."

What's interesting to note is that Macapagal's prior became an opportunity for a national consensus. Barry have never managed to suppose the declaration of June 12 as Philippine Independence Day, but the decision did not be done. Nor he deftly exercised the powers of his office to put the Americans to their place and make his mark. He started though the erosion of our Republic—and, then, our people's—sense of identity. Philippine and American governments sorted out the question of where to locate the embassy, and on the date of the US surrender that an appointed should be attached (for before the American was to be handed over to Philippine custody) will give the Americans credit for six much overpaying they have done has been purely responsible of Philippine law and the legal process; in that sense, the Visiting Forces Agreement has worked well for both sides; as no single have the Americans shown an inclination simply to vehicle away the accused and prevent their trial. And the Philippine have given no indication that they will be in so loosing any of their rights to have the Americans then their accused home, which I suspect will date whenever public enthusiasm eased for the VFA outside official circles.

What should surprise is not what the Americans have done, but what we have done. Our own chief executive chose to do. My understanding, based on talks with Philippine diplomats, is that the executive's behavior and arguments—up to the point the Americans convicted was handled back to US custody—was the correct one. It was also the right course of action. But then, the President herself said that the announcement of the Baldomero's postponement was not high a price to pay for measures to be undertaken in the country. If the postponed son of Iraq, in this instance, the three pounds of flesh we had to pay was the one which even the Americans had shown signs of unwillingness.

Surely an impenetrable offense? But then what's one more?

And so, we have what we have, which is—as related Americans—a Philippines that even the moderate—the Court of Appeals towards whistling as it entered to the wind.

The administration's overcompensation by calling the commemoration of the VFA Day if so, does nonetheless the anchor of Philippine foreign policy for the next 50 years (as the Treaty of 1951 the 1950s). The US Embassy is right when it has pledged to police to better more thoroughly, which will do much more than relating on an ally that's generally faithless.

Role of community in learning process

THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION LAUNCHED BY THE Foundation for Worldwide People Power in 1986 has now entered its fifth year.

We are elated that today, major private sector organizations, like the League of Corporate Foundations and the Philippine Business for Education, have started to lend our still-for a national movement to make our education system truly relevant and socially transformative.

As of this writing, the member companies of the LCF and the PBED are currently at work crafting an education reform agenda called ET-71 presented on the qualitative improvement of learning outcomes throughout the public education system.

A cornerstone of this campaign is the People Power-inspired community participation strategy developed by the PWAPF Our founder—Ms. Eggie Tiaoni Apostol—has said many times that it is her conviction that the complexities of the task of education reform calls for deeper community involvement. The PWAPF's community participation strategy aims to help communities prioritize and address their respective education concerns.

But in the age of Google, Youtube and Yahoo, what education concerns should parents in the community prioritize, exactly?

Less than a decade ago, those veritable workhorses of information were the private possessions of the privileged private school students. Say scanners. The libraries and ubiquitous net-cafes don't seem now reflect current access, in broadband or not.

The fact that the average public school student's command of the English language is in the low 50 percent has not deterred him at all from figuring out how to play online games, move people via Friendster, and send text messages—and e-mails, the country—of the worldwide web.

And yet, back in the classroom the drab-and-dull method of instruction still prevails. The divide between the classroom and the real world is growing wider by the minute, making a pupil to memorize the names of Philippine monuments (right down to the number of steps) because the school authorities say that this information can be readily called up with a few keystrokes. High school students no longer read term papers; all they need to know now is how to cut and paste. How then should we contextualize our quest for a relevant learning system?

The PWAPF has consistently maintained that our search are the heart of the Education Revolution, because that is ing in school is unspendable without them. Through our literacy-through-the-Internet program, we have sought to make teachers (plus themselves and their teaching skills against what a student needs to learn to succeed in the globalized 21st century world.

As teachers and mentors, how do we make our teaching and learning processes responsive to the educational needs of today's students?

Private students are more well-to-do than public students—and should be—the basic minimum. Proficiency in Math, Science and English forms the fundamental building blocks upon which real learning takes place.

Beyond the strengthening of these cognitive skills, the students, parents and all education stakeholders in the community must help students discover discipline, perseverance and socialize information.

To encourage better reading skills, both in school and the community can foster the creation of club houses outdoor nooks, even carefully selected reading materials to enhance students' reading. In writing as, we encourage a deeper approach to learning, as opposed to mindless memorization or outline learning.

In our discussing the Montessori sessions, we encourage our teachers to allow students to work in country where done and quick learners mingle. That's because the results of education are not measured by examinations alone. Learning is also additionally, students acquire values such as respect, responsibility, honesty and punctuality.

But how do we know if our students are actually learning what is being taught? More importantly, how will the students themselves know if they are learning or not?

Tests and examinations are integral to the teaching-learning. When administered consistently and properly, they can provide the learning assessment tools for both the learner and the teacher. The single well-constructed tests, the teacher has the opportunity to precisely determine the mastered mastery levels. At the same time, the students gets an accurate gauge of his progress.

Sadly though, many of our teachers revel in dictator-centered construction skills. In fact, we have met teachers who are vain to punish students or even entire classes for being unruly. Others use tests as a tool to "humiliate students" or give them something to do while the teacher attends to some other matters. We all have a part to play in improving the learning outcomes of today's Filipino pupils and students.

Teachers need to have access to better and more modern teaching methods and learning materials. But other must be exposed to "inspiring an insatiable love for learning in their students, and that is something that cannot be found in any manual or module.

On the other hand, very few things can motivate a teacher better than concerned and caring parents who assist the best education possible for their children. This has been proven time and again across social strata.

Likewise, every community has a major stake in their schools because good schools are strong indicators of a healthy and vibrant community. However, a good school needs to come to be. If the community wills it to be so.

Dr. Evelyn Mojillonez is national coordinator of the Mentoring the Masters program, while Butch Hernandez is the executive director of the Foundation for Worldwide People Power.

COMMENTARY

Dr. Evelyn Mojillonez and Butch Hernandez

THEY SAID

SAVIOR

"In this post-modern age, perhaps for United needs a savior all the more, since the society in which he lives has become more complex and the threats to his personal and family integrity have become more multifaceted."

—Pope Benedict XVI to the 'Order of Malta' in the Quirinale

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Nicole's one last hope

ALTHOUGH I AM OF THE SENSE that a pending appeal means that the legal process is not over until final, I presume to make observations in the pending Parvis Agreement, turning over Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody was the right thing to do, I was disgusted to see Makabulos here-owl machinations—nay, bulldozed aside the judicial friends of the government—prance to yield to American pressures.

Why didn't it wait for a court order, instead of dismissing a "hostile appellant" to spring Smith out of jail? As something was the Court of Appeals' crown decision. By deeming the custody issue moot, the appellate court in effect said that the matter was beyond the courts. Whatever happened to the balance and delineation of power in a democracy?

If a Filipino serviceman were convicted in the United States today and sent to jail pending appeal, would George W. Bush even lift a finger to get his little brown brother out of jail for the sake of good US-Philippine relations? No, his ass is worry-free episode, too—given the Filipinos' unending sense of inferiority—and easily fade in the national consciousness as the next action of government scandals and musings unfold.

All it took was for Nicole—though, as the girl has some bright ideas. When she becomes a US citizen, Uncle Sam will surely fight for her souls and soul, wherever in the world she may be.

—REYNARD SUNG,
2291 Magnolia St., San Valley,
Paranaque City

Yes to Asean community, no to integration

WE, OF THE ALYANSA AGRIKULTURA, voice our disappointment with the current developments being taken by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations toward regional integration.

The current model merely mimics and—even accelerates the process of trade liberalization, being pushed by the regional and multilateral agreements espousing policies which have resulted in loss of livelihood and worsened food insecurity and poverty in the developing countries. This will only add to the Asean processes that exclude a broad segment of the so-called "Asean community" and, not surprisingly, lead to the loss of the basis for its support for the specific needs and interests of agriculture—a sector that directly provides livelihood and sustenance for millions of people in the region.

We believe the time has come for a major paradigm shift. We, therefore, recommend that the Asean:

1. Establish an agri-fishery stakeholders consultation mechanism similar to the Asean Business Advisory Council (ABAC). The role of a truly "caring, sharing community" entails that Asean states, in promoting the Asean region as more inclusive and more responsive participation, consultation and engagement in its decision-making as guiding tenets of "the Asean way." Since agriculture only one segment of the Asean community, Asean should provide a similar venue for agri-fishery stakeholders.

2. Recognize agriculture's inherent multi-functional role. Agriculture, especially in developing countries, is central to the issues of food security, rural development, biodiversity and climate change. Thus, the Asean and its member states should go beyond trade to include these more fundamental issues.

3. Focus on people, not profits. The current paradigm puts the Asean economic integration, emphasizing profits above all. We believe that it is time to bring people back into the center of the Asean discourse, and put them, not profit, at the top of the Asean agenda.

4. Implement policy reforms, approved liberalization based on the demands for food security, livelihood and rural development, taking into account a lot of sensitive products, and ready to delay liberalization until certain conditions is achieved. This would ensure that the differing levels of development among the Asean members are considered as well.

5. Align with and strengthen the G-33 (the biggest grouping in the World Trade Organization) which champions the interests of developing countries. The Philippine effort, along with Indonesia, has been leading the G-33 should reverse its decision to withdraw from the idea.

6. Craft a common regional agri-fishery program which incorporates a regional strategic agri-industrial development plan could provide support for and develop competitiveness among the agri-fishery sectors within its member countries.

—ERIC BOROMPEDAY,
president, Alyansa Agrikultura,
Oyama Agriculture Governance,
a Citizens' Initiative, Diliman, QC

Zamboanga benefiting from VFA

THE BALIKATAN EXERCISES HOSTED in no less in Zamboanga City. The presence of American forces here has opened up business opportunities for the local business community, and created jobs for local residents. Besides, The 60 contingent here also monitors medical and dental missions in barangays that are neglected by our government.

To top it all, the Americans have helped to unleash the activities of the Abu Sayyaf terrorists, upgrade our military capabilities and provide intelligence information on the movements of international terrorists in Mindanao. The Visiting Forces Agreement should not be abolished.

—TONY D'ERAZUR,
91 Talon Talon, Zamboanga City

OPINION

LETTERS

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, China Bank Building, 8745 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City, Metro Manila, Philippines 1226; fax it to 892-2573, 897-8704, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Nation monitoring Bersamin case

THE WELL-PLANNED AND COLD-blooded murder of the Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. inside the premises of a church in Quezon City on Dec. 15, 2006 is the latest in the series of killings which have claimed the lives of politicians in Aklan. If there are obvious similarities...or a pattern...in these killings, why is it that the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation cannot solve these crimes?

PNP Director General Oscar Calderon has assured the Bersamin family that the murder of Representative Bersamin will be solved. But it is not only the Bersamins who are aggrieved. It is the entire nation. The country was an assault on our Christian and human values. And the nation wants more than an assurance; it wants the speedy delivery of assurances and has hunches as to that peace and order is restored, and justice is served well.

The nation is monitoring developments on the Bersamin case. We do not want politicians with murderous inclinations ruling these and our provinces.

—ARCHILLES CASTRO,
Novaliches, Quezon City

GMA 'truly the region's angel of death'

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL ARROYO'S PROposal for an executive pact among Asean economies falls in line with George W. Bush's "surge" policy in Iraq, a policy that is now also pushing for a more aggressive intervention in Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

The Cold War's proxy wars are now being revived in the context of a new myth—that of "civilizations," about which Samuel Huntington never so tardily as the "American Century" project of the "neoconservatives in Washington. Through his Asian—although insisting recently in Davos that he is not pushing the "Huntington of Civilizations" in concept, concerning his aggressive push for the anti-terror bill—the Americanist of Intolerance Arroyo is now being courted as another Cold War.

The final militarist bout of the revival of bygone-days expression region order is now unbounded, remembering the ongoing persecution of the communists of the country in the country. Death will soon be at the doorsteps of those who are anti-terrorists. He favors a really dire region angel of death.

—FERDINAND LEVIS,
Father Urbano Del Rosario Street,
Poblacion, Dasmariñas, Cavite

Nicole's one last hope

ALTHOUGH I AM OF THE SENSE that a pending appeal means that the legal process is not over until final, I presume to make observations in the pending Parvis Agreement, turning over Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody was the right thing to do, I was disgusted to see Makabulos-Revilla-owl machinations—nay, bulldozed aside the judicial friends of the government—prance to yield to American pressures.

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—REYNARD SUNG,
2291 Magnolia St., San Valley,
Paranaque City

Planet Mars is Earth, we men are the true Martians

THREE DECADES AGO, A GROUP OF British scholars set out to determine the extent of man's penchant for war. In their search for answers, these intrepid data crunchers famously pored over thousands and thousands of pages containing 15,000 years of recorded history—from the ancient Mesopotamian civilizations up to the 1970s when the Vietnam War was raging. Their researchers documented that, in all that time, mankind has had only 27 years—six hedgehogs 27 years—of peace, which they defined as the absence of war anywhere on the planet.

Reading about this in one of the few dailies delivered under martial law at remanded my early days it remains as vivid in my mind to this day. Only 27 years without a war anywhere on the mortal planet. Incredible! And harrowing facts, there's seeming room for war in fresh corners of existing there have only been 16 days of peace out of the 12,000 days from 1981 to 2005.

Our country continues to contribute to the enduring evil of war with its festering state autonomous and Muslim insurgencies.

Mankind has always given peace lip service. History proves this, and so does the commanding of wars and armed conflicts, as well as the over a billion deaths they have caused. Sadly, war has always been—and remains—the favored arbiter of disputes between nations or armed groups. It is also the most effective in terms of how it affects him—the bloody seats of the vast conflict and the site after that.

Written World War I, the "war to end all wars," that ignited World War II. History's bloodiest, which climaxed to the proxy wars between democracy and communism that, in turn, gave birth to the terrorist threat in the endless that haunt today's world. And if we took to the 14th century, he will see our own revolution against Spain, one of the many wars for independence fought by enslaved peoples against predatory European empires.

Why then must we fight war to kill? The answers are as complex as the causes of war. But scholars can believe the biblical axiom that man leans in man's hearts, as take two acronym my mother's opinion that men were are ignited by greed, we cannot escape the reality of war's stranglehold on civilization.

COMMENTARY

Art Valeriano

Viewed from this aspect, peace appears to be those rare moments when Mars, the god of war, becomes so relentless choke-hold on mankind's luck, fears, therefore, is mankind's breathing freely.

A time War has arrived and, with it, the inevitability that there will be no additional days of peace in 2007 to add to those previous 26 days. The wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Darfur will see to that, as will our own unthinkable insurgency. Then there are those "wars-to-waiting," such as in North Korea, Lebanon, Iran, Taiwan, Bosnia and Georgia, among others.

A broad look at countries of another world—like the dismal calculation of both combatants—not military victory—has been the chief reason for ending their wars.

The evolution of today's warfare has moved on and, savage guerrilla conflicts will again overthrow this, and will ensure that military victory only becomes a mirage in the desert.

With military victory all but impossible, there seems little reason why man should go to war at all. He hates it, to lose to revolt to continue to kill his own. George W. Bush and Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction come to mind here.

The existentialist in "Thou shalt not kill" remains the "Eternal Casualty of War": peace is not static, as simply position.

This piece doesn't discover the wars in Iraq, but it will be a more fitting time for this "decision-makers" mark, and Mariano's more exact description of its dominant life form.

Welcome to Mars. And which war do you want to fight in first?

Art Villanueva has been a student of war and mankind's morbid attachment to it for decades. He wrote a column about the Philippines' role in the Korean War at www.geocities.com/pabook and is busy compiling data for a book. He is also working on researches about the Philippines' participation in the Korean War.

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Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO RE-BID FOR GRAINS HANDLING & OTHER RELATED WAREHOUSE HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA REGION V

The National Food Authority Regional Office No. V Legazpi City through its 2007 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of P 10,000,000.00 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the provision of grains handling and other warehouse related services in Region V for the calendar year 2007 detailed out in the following:

Lot	Warehouse	Location of NFA Warehouse	Estimated Volume to be Handled per Month	Estimated No. of Mixing	Estimated Budget for the Contract (ABC)
1	Albay	Legazpi City	100,000	Maximum of 5 mixing	P 1,000,000.00
2	Camarines Sur	Naga	150,000	Maximum of 5 mixing	P 1,500,000.00
3	Camarines Norte	Daet/Basud	100,000	Maximum of 5 mixing	P 1,000,000.00
4	Masbate	Masbate City	100,000	Maximum of 5 mixing	1,000,000.00
5	Sorsogon	Sorsogon City/Bulan/Irosin/Gubat	100,000	Maximum of 5 mixing	P 1,000,000.00
6	Catanduanes	Virac, Catanduanes	150,000	Maximum of 5 mixing	P 1,500,000.00
TOTAL			1,000,000		P 10,000,000.00

The prospective bidders are required to submit a letter of intent duly published of a cost reasonably applicable for processing of this bid on or before the last day of the issuance in the eligibility and other pertinent documents required by the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC).

1. DTI Business name / SEC registration and/or BIR registration certificate which may be applicable;
2. Latest Income Tax Return and Official Receipt;
3. Valid and current Mayor's/Business permit for handling services duly issued;
4. Eligibility criteria and standards for prospective bidders: Legal, single contract obligation within the last 3 years with the NFA or any other government agency; Financial, with net worth of at least 10% of the ABC; Technical, with adequate facilities and equipment to handle the volume of grains to be handled within the contract period; Safety must be at least 50% of the ABC to be bid. For this purpose, a percentage of the contract price will be considered as safe.

The prospective bidders are required to complying with the above requirements shall be allowed to purchase the bidder's documents from the RBAC secretariat upon payment of a non-refundable bidding fee of Php 1,000.00(R).

The bidding of warehouse handling services by NFA Region V Legazpi City shall be conducted by the RBAC and its Technical Working Group (TWG) on the date/time/place:

The terms of bidding services will be made on the first floor of the NFA Legazpi Office, NFA Site, Legazpi City on the following schedule:

ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME
1. Submission of letter of intent and issuance of eligibility documents	January 16 - 17, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
2. Pre-bid conference	January 18, 2007	10:00 a.m.
3. Deadline for submission of eligibility requirements	January 19, 2007	5:00 p.m.
4. Deadline for the issuance of Certificate of Eligibility	January 22, 2007	5:00 p.m.
5. Deadline for the submission of bids	January 23, 2007	8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
6. Opening of bids	January 23, 2007	2:00 p.m.
7. Post-qualification	January 24, 2007	10:00 a.m.
8. Submission of the recommendation	February 5, 2007	5:00 p.m.

For further inquiries, please contact the RBAC Chairman or Secretariat at NFA Legazpi City with telephone nos. (052) 480-9041 and 480-9042.

The NFA Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any formality therein, or accept such bid as may be considered most advantageous to the government and people.

ATTY. JOSE S. OLIVARES
RBAC Chairman

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Tsunami scare grips N. Samar town

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IN CATARman, Northern Samar, abandoned their homes on Saturday night and sought refuge in places they thought were safe as a tsunami scare engulfed the provincial capital.

Fearing that their town would be hit by the tsunami, said to be a result of an 8.1-magnitude earthquake that hit Japan's northern coast in the Pacific on Saturday, the people began to panic, went out of their houses and occupied the streets of Catarman, including the Catholic cathedral, according to provincial board member Marites Ullamate.

"I myself was asked by a neighbor to leave (my) house because the town would be hit by a tsunami. Thank God it did not happen so I know it would not," she told the Inquirer.

Ullamate, who was not persuaded to leave their house in Barangay Dalakit, said the branches' reaction ran an advisory by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) that the tremor that hit Japan would not spin off any tsunamis.

"Still, several people went out in the streets and some even went beside the Catarman Cathedral ... seeking safety," Ullamate, reached on her mobile phone, said.

She said the people began leaving their homes in around 8 p.m. and brought personal belongings and even kitchenware with them. Several shrines were occupied with people, some in their vehicles.

The people stayed even on the runway of the domestic airport, Ullamate added.

"There was also information that some people went to the mountains within the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP)," the provincial official said.

According to her, the panic could have started when the water level of the Catarman River suddenly receded several meters from the banks and flowed into the sea.

The river courses through the town proper, behind the public market, before it empties into the sea.

The receding of the waters came just hours after the tremor hit Japan.

The people were only persuaded to return home at past 8 p.m. when a local radio station announced that the (tsunami alert) issued by the Phivolcs had been lifted, Ullamate said.

ASEAN SECURITY
A child looks apprehensive as riot police move deployed to secure the Cebu International Convention Center where the 12th Asean summit is being held.

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Only quality products during flower festival

By Desiree Caluza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—ORGANIZERS of the annual "Panagbenga Flower Festival" here said they were tapping the resources of the foreign community and the Cordillera province so they can exhibit their best products instead of mostly street food that had dominated the event for the last 10 years.

Anthony de Leon, president of the Hotels and Restaurant Association of Baguio (HRAB), said the festival had been receiving flak from tourists because it did not present a Cordillera character during the "Session Road in Bloom" event.

He said tourists had complained about hot dogs, barbecue and other food stalled on the streets during the festival.

"Session Road in Bloom," a weeklong activity which requires the city to close a stretch of Session Road to vehicular traffic, is one of the highlights of the Panagbenga. The festival has attracted tourists because of its street dancers.

"There will be no more hot dogs, (one (roasted)), mais (corn) and (sinuggo (five rounders)) (along Session Road). We will be very strict in screening products which are appropriate to the theme," De Leon said in a forum here.

Organizers have also decided to replace canvas awnings, bamboo poles, tabalis and local rock bands with cordorous.

They said they wanted the "original flavor of the North" and the international flavors to take center stage on Session Road when it is closed starting Feb. 26.

De Leon said the organizers would make sure that exhibitors from Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, La Union, Tarlac, Pampanga and the Caraballos would reflect the theme of the flower festival.

Establishments are encouraged to promote French, Spanish, Japanese and other international cuisines, he said.

He said the decision to showcase high-profile products should not be perceived as "elitist" by banning sidewalk vendors from participating.

"Just because we are promoting international flavors, it does not mean that they are not participants (for the festival). We want to upgrade the standards of the people by giving them a unique experience," he said.

He said the new strategy aims to attract more tourists to the city.

"We want to stage something that will surprise the community. In the past, Session Road just became a flea market of sorts. But now, we want to give ((our)) (visitors) the tourism to come up," said lawyer Dennis Hangaoat Jr., executive chair of the Baguio Flower Festival Foundation Inc.

He said "Session Road in Bloom" was going to be the province's (yet for the city's plaza in contrast) downtown into a huge promenade area.

Air quality experts place the highest concentrations of Baguio pollutants along this stretch of Session Road.

Iloilo governor vows to defy dismissal order

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—A SHOWDOWN looms at the Iloilo provincial capitol after Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Sr. vowed to defy a dismissal order related to graft charges expected to be served today by the Department of Interior and Local Government.

"I cannot follow an illegal order and I will not step down. Never," Tupas told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

Tupas said he did not know what offense he was committed and the case that was used as the basis of the dismissal order.

The DILG was expected to implement today the dismissal from office of Tupas after the Ombudsman issued a decision finding the governor guilty of graft charges.

DILG Undersecretary Marcelino Sandoval said his office received a decision from the Ombudsman last Friday ordering Tupas' dismissal for graft.

The dismissal order was among those sent to the DILG office along with the orders to suspend Batangas Gov. Armando Sanchez for corruption charges and his several other local officials.

Andanar, who is in Cebu attending the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit, said he did not know of the details of the case against Tupas because he left for Cebu on Thursday.

"We will come out with our implementation order based on the Ombudsman decision on Monday," Andanar said in a telephone interview.

Virginia Palmera Santiago, Deputy Ombudsman-Visayas said she did not know what case was used as the basis of the dismissal order.

"The governor has many pending cases and we had forwarded our findings and recommendations to our central office which is the one that announces the findings," Santiago said in a telephone interview. She refused to give the details of the cases because several of them are still under investigation.

Tupas said he would accept a copy of the Ombudsman's decision if it was served at his office but not a dismissal order.

The governor said he would not vacate his post because under the rules of the Ombudsman, he is given 15 days to file a motion for reconsideration. He said he has also the option to question the order in court by filing for a petition for review.

Tupas said the dismissal is a case of "political persecution and harassment" because of his close association with former Senate President Franklin Drilon.

The two, along with the Drilon bloc in the Liberal Party, broke ties with President Macapagal-Arroyo and called for her resignation on July 2005 at the height of the political crisis surrounding from the allegations of electoral fraud in the 2004 elections against the President.

He said the administration also resorted to this move because it could not field any candidates to recapture him in the May elections.

The governor blamed Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales, a staunch ally of the President, for instigating the dismissal order.

"He (Gonzales) wants to lord over the province as well because he already is in control of Iloilo City," said Tupas.

Gonzales denied any knowledge of the order.

"Why blame me? It was the Ombudsman who issued the decision, not my office. There's no logic there," said Gonzales in a telephone interview.

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT
These migratory birds are regularly seen frequenting a drained fishpond in Barangay Batangan, Tagum City, which is near residential area. The government recently raised its alert for the possible entry in the country of the bird flu virus that had stricken various parts of Asian countries in past years.

BIR exec under probe denies wrongdoing

DAVAO CITY—THE OFFICIAL OF THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), who was charged with graft by the Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS) of the Department of Finance, denied any wrongdoing.

The RIPS said that based on its investigation, Marietes Ramasco has accumulated unexplained wealth although her annual salary is only about P200,000.

In 1999, the agency said, Ramasco's net worth was only P218,520, which increased to P335,000 in 1991.

The RIPS said their investigation also showed that the BIR official had accumulated P30 million in several years.

Ramasco, through her lawyer Ramon Edison Batacan, has welcomed the charge against her saying it would help her clear her name.

But the investigation conducted by the RIPS was allegedly based on pure speculation and guesswork.

"The investigation is deplorable as it denied our client due process. It (did not only) violate(s) her constitutional rights but the one count that said speculative if not totally ridiculous," Batacan said in a statement.

Batacan said the findings of the investigation could belie the existence of unexplained wealth.

"How can a car worth P80,000 and jewelry valued at P45,000 be considered as unsubstantial, much less, unexplained?" Batacan pointed out.

The car, a Mitsubishi L200 was now in "disrepair," was bought on installment and paid out of income from the earnings of the business of Marietes's husband since long ta Batacan.

He said Marietes's husband, a former employee of a pharmaceutical company, manages his own "serbisyo mawsoli" business, with 20 trisaks all over Davao City.

The business, which started in 1995, has an annual gross income of P20 million, he said.

"The manner by which the investigation was conducted and the haste in revealing the results to the media all the more gives rise to suspicion that the real RIPS is only after media mileage to draw up accomplishment," Batacan said.

He said if RIPS was serious in rooting after corrupt government officials, "it should have filed the same charges against all DOF and BIR employees sporting flashy cars and wearing expensive watches and jewelry." Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao

ROUNDUP

Consular offices pushed

DAVAO CITY—Councilor Peter Cuella has filed a resolution urging South Korea to establish a consular office in the city. Cuella on Tuesday also called on Filipinos to support the consular offices here, which was shut down in 1993. There have been a growing number of South Koreans and Chinese in the city, some of them studying or doing business. About 400 South Koreans live in the City and they have to fly to Manila or Cebu to have their documents updated or processed. Cuella said South Korea and China have also become aggressive partners of the Philippines in tourism, trade and socio-cultural aspects. He said the presence of a consul here could also strengthen the city's ties with its sister city of Nanning in China. Mayor Rodrigo Duterte has forged the sister-hood agreement with the mayor of Nanning last year. "It will also be a welcome development for the airline that opened a direct flight between Davao and Korea and Macao," he said. Only Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia have consulates in the city while Palau, the Czech Republic and Nepal have honorary consuls.
RICHARD ALAN, Inquirer Mindanao

Rebels burn tractors

BACOLOD CITY—A newsman who refused to join "revolutionary" tours to the New People's Army-held San Isidro (Abra) were burned down by suspected rebels in Barangay Cadiz, Cadiz City, 85.2 km north of here. Lt. Col. Felicito Buenaagua, commander of the Army's Task Force North, said the 10 NPA guerrillas, including three women, set ablaze on the engine compartment of Betty Montevirgen Jan. 7, as the drivers and helpers of two other tractors owned by Montevirgen, a Bacolod businessman, fled. Buenaagua said in this past, two other tractors owned by Montevirgen, in Barangay San Isidro, C.B. Magsaysay and Barangay Cadiz Viejo, had also been gutted by suspected rebels. Insurgents had also rendered helpless in Hacienda Montevirgen, C.B. Magsaysay, he said.
Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

Negros village chief slain

BACOLOD CITY—A village chief of Silay City, Negros Occidental was shot dead at the fish port in Barangay Banago, Bacolod City at about 6:20 a.m. Thursday. Roderito Banaag, captain Nicolas Quemada, 53, was shot in the nape and was declared dead on arrival at the Riverside Medical Center here. He sustained identified as Emiliano Saballo Pasa Jr., 48, of Barangay Tanza, C.B. Magsaysay town, wounded in legs. Police said that around 5:30 a.m. Banaag and Pasa, Dionisio Lastimosa and Pam engaged in a heated argument when the latter took a handful of shrimps from the victim's bin.
Carla P. Gomez, Inquirer Visayas

Port hits P9-B surplus

IMUS, Cavite—Despite the significant decrease in shipments, an official of the Port of Batangas (PBC) on Tuesday said it had registered P9.2 billion surplus in its collections last year, topping the aggregate surplus collections from the port's inception in the past nine years. Gracia Tuller-Carriaga, PCB district collector, said their actual collection of P10.6 billion for 2006 was 15 percent higher than their target collection of P21.6 billion.
Nikko Dizon, Inquirer Southern Luzon

New Laguna police chief

STA. ROSA, Laguna—And two days before a two-in-a-reassignment of police officials in the country, the Laguna police office announced its new director on Friday. The unique story of the Laguna police office here, Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas was installed as the new provincial police chief, replacing Senior Supt. Lutalo de Leon. Rojas, a member of Class 1986 of the Philippine Military Academy, was a former police chief of San Pablo City. In assignment of the Laguna police is said to be a "personal request" of Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro to Philippine National Police chief Director General Oscar Calderon.
Nikko Dizon, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Legal team formed to help prosecute Chinese poachers

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYERS ON Friday formed a group that would help prosecute Chinese fishermen caught encroaching on the Tubbataha Reefs National Marine Park last December.

Lawyer Antonio Oposa Jr said a group of "high-powered" legal counsels had been organized to help the Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) in their battle to end poaching and guard the protected marine park from abuse.

In a meeting at The Peak in Tagaytay City members of the long-ground day of the Philippine-Association (PBA) and other concerned individuals agreed to draft a framework and protocol on how to handle poaching and other illegal fishing activities.

"We will develop a legal protocol so the concerned agencies will know how to react to such cases as poaching," he told the lawyers.

Park protection

Oposa, also the chair of the BP-PEMSE said medium-term and long-term programs had been set to help protect the Tubbataha Reefs.

He said the group would first focus on the prosecution of cases filed against the Chinese fishermen who were freed on Tuesday after posting bail.

He said measures were also declared of a Palawan Regional Trial Court judge to release the Chinese, "If he can't go on, he can be out on bail[no] by three Chinese fishermen because we have allowed ourselves to be bullied," he said in a mobile phone interview.

"We want to send a message that we have a collective will to prevent the recurrence of this incident."

Among the lawyers who pledged support were Linda Jo-vanna, PBA president; Gregorio Ilarde; Victor Lacanilao; Benjamin Tabios of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources; Gerbin Anda of the TMO; Mariano Nava; Jim Ayes, Raul Bese and Gary Bonoan from the office of Sen. Loretta Madrigal; and actress Mendoza and Raven Bayas of the BP-MMT.

Oposa said lawyer Oscar Bernardo, chief of the Anti-Organized Crime Task Force of the National Bureau of Investigation, had also committed to help the group.

Boat released

On Thursday, the lawyers learned that a Palawan judge had also recommended the release of another boat seized by Chinese fishermen and booked with wildlife charges after ordering the release of the 24 Chinese poachers.

Magdiwan Dungca, TMO manager, said Judge Teodoro Bay of RTC Branch 52 issued the release order for the King Ching Hai boat to its captain, a certain Chuang Huang Shu.

Bay's ruling is assigned to the assessment court in Palawan, also known as the bar section of unconfined natural resources in the country.

The boat was released on the same day that five others[no] accused in the 24 Chinese boats the provincial jail.

Those released were among the 30-crew members of a boat apprehended by TMO personnel while illegally entering the protected Tubbataha park on Dec. 31, 2006.

Dungca said the King Ching Hai was intercepted on June 17, 2006 off Mangsee Island in Balabac, Palawan. Marlon Ramos, reporter Southern Luzon

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•PROGRAM of ACTIVITIES•

08:00 – 09:00 H	Registration	11:45 – 12:30 H	Open Forum
09:00 – 09:10 H	National Anthem/Doxology	12:30 – 13:30 H	Lunch Break
09:10 – 09:15 H	Welcome Remarks **Dr. Roberto M. Pineros** Chairman Philippine Cancer Society	13:30 – 13:45 H	Hospice Home Care in the Community Setting **Dr. Rhodora Bompat** Executive Director Manila de Arinzi Hospice Foundation
09:15 – 09:30 H	Key Note Speaker **Hon. Francisco T. Duque III** Secretary of Health	13:45 – 14:30 H	How to Handle Burn Out **Dr. Rosalie Elser** Executive Director Asia Pacific Hospice Network
09:30 – 10:15 H	Updates on Hospice in the Region **Dr. Rosalie Elser** Executive Director Asia Pacific Hospice Network	14:30 – 15:00 H	Coffee Break
10:15 – 10:30 H	Coffee Break	15:00 – 15:45	Estate Planning **Ms. Divina Garcia** Tax Consultant Hospice Philippines
10:30 – 11:00 H	Pain as a Fifth Vital Sign **Dr. Henry U. Lu** President Pain Society of the Philippines	15:45 – 16:30	Open Forum
11:00 – 11:45 H	Hospice Home Care and Hospice **Dr. Andrew E. Ang** Consultant (R-ITR)	16:30 – 16:45	Closing Remarks **Mr. Leonardo B. Tejardo** Executive Director Philippine Cancer Society

Department of Health and Philippine Cancer Society 2007 National Cancer Consciousness Campaign

January Kick-Off – February	Every 3rd week of January Diet and Exercise Awareness Month
March	Colon and Rectal Awareness Month
April	Cancer in Children Awareness Month
May	Cervical Cancer Awareness Month
June	Prostate Cancer Awareness Month
July	Lung Cancer Awareness Month
August	Lung Cancer Awareness Month
September	Liver Cancer Awareness Month
October	Breast Cancer Awareness Month
November	Cancer Pain Management Awareness Month
December	Thanksgiving Month

China next major destination of Filipino workers

By Ronnel W. Domingo

CHINA MAY become another major destination for Filipino workers when China is part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed an agreement on trade in services (TIS) aimed at expanding the two-way movement of skills and talent.

To be in force by July 2007, the TIS pact is part of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and would extend to services and service providers from a trading country to that particular investment in the receiving country.

This means, for example, that a Filipino teacher who will work in China would be treated like a local teacher in terms of profession, at status and would not be required to secure permits usually required of foreign workers.

Ronald G. Dee, special envoy for international trade negotiations, said in an interview the signing of the TIS pact would open up vast opportunities for Filipinos as China had a growing need of health care workers, nurses, engineers, architects and even lawyers and accountants with experience in the international environment.

"This would mark well as an push for a comprehensive mutual recognition arrangement within ASEAN," Dee said. "We can offer more world-quality workers made from nurses and engineers."

Services covered in the agreement include computer-related jobs, real estate services, market research and opinion polling, advertising, construction and engineering, tourism and travel, transport, education, telecommunications, health-related and social services, recreational, cultural and sporting services, environment and energy.

Further negotiations

China and Asean are set to engage in further negotiations over the next year on a new round of commitments as well as additional service sub-sectors that would be liberalized.

During the Asean-China Summit held here yesterday, Premier Wen Jiabao said China would work closely with Asean members in promoting exchanges of students, teachers, scientists, writers and artistes, as well as on the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas issued by China and Asean governments.

"We need each other. In our respective development process, we and we are bound by common interests," Wen said.

Francis Chua, president of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc., said Asean and other benefits were expected from an agreement to be signed today between the Commission on Higher Education and China's Ministry of Education.

"China prefers to develop its own professionals but at this point it is open to tapping expertise from outside," Chua said. "These agreements would increase deployment to China of Filipinos with technical, survey management skills and health-related know-how."

Events organizers needed

Further, Chua said, Filipino event organizers were favored for projects by established nods operating in the mainland.

"With the signing of the agreement, employment of these people is now to the event level with the upcoming 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai," Chua said.

But he added that Filipino talent may not even need to go to China as the Chinese themselves have been coming to the Philippines for training.

"In fact, St. Paul University in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, is already operating a school mainly for Chinese students from the mainland," Chua said.

Through various education initiatives sent to China in the past three years, countless Filipino members of the Philippines and China have partnered to accommodate Chinese students and students in short-term training programs in Philippine schools.

China, Asean move closer to free trade

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peoples to within reach," an elated Macapagal said in a statement issued a day after concluding the Asean summit that she described as "productive."

"With the issues moving forward to amend firm accords on its area charter, security, overseas workers and trade, the greatest for the region becoming a formidable bloc in the world is well within our reach," Ms Arroyo said.

"From a sharing and caring community we can become a dynamo as the hub and core of East Asia, interested in robust, open trade both within the region and across the ocean—building security and prosperity in millions of communities from East to West."

Closer integration

"The unequivocal commitment and common spirit of the leaders of the region have turned out as an unprecedented road map of Asean community toward closer integration and greater heights of achievements by 2015, backed by enhanced economic, political and socio-cultural partnerships," said the President.

The President said the 10 parties parting leaders had agreed to uphold the "centrality of Asean" as envisioned in the Cebu Declaration on the blueprint for the Asean charter. "We acknowledged that Asean must remain cohesive with strong institutions and responsive policies for regional community building," she said.

Indian Asean members sat down yesterday to continue negotiations with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand. Ms Arroyo exhorted the dialogue partners to push for the early conclusion of the free trade agreements (FTA).

East Asia summit

"These FTAs taken together will deepen East Asian economic integration which will benefit the peoples of the region," the President said.

On the start of the Second East Asia Summit (EAS) meeting today, Ms Arroyo said she looked forward to the signing of the Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security which would help shape a common regional policy for energy issues.

"We agreed on the need to strengthen cooperation with other EAS partners and reaffirmed that the Asean plus three process would be the main vehicle toward achieving an East Asian community," she said.

'Balancing role'

China's Premier Wen Jiabao, the first to hold a summit with the Asean leaders, was hoping to use the meetings to bolster Beijing's regional clout. Japan, South Korea and India—equally eager to engage Asean—are also trying to play a high profile.

According to draft statements on the talks, Asean:

- Expressed support for India's "Look East" policy, and suggested that Southeast Asia play a "balancing role" between the emerging powerhouses of India and China. It also expressed support for a Free Trade Agreement between India and Asean member states.
- Pointed to babies in countries with fatal diets, particularly in poverty eradication, disaster management and developing natural resources.
- Expressed concern over the spread of bird flu and the need for greater preparedness.
- Welcomed the inauguration of South Korea's Ban Ki-moon as secretary general of the United Nations.

The security situation on the three Reinhardt was also on the table.

Along with Asean meetings, the leaders of Japan, China and South Korea met separately and then again together for a three-party summit.

The East Asian countries are trying to find a way to persuade North Korea to return to international talks aimed at getting it to abandon its nuclear weapons program. The most recent round of multilateral talks on the issue broke down without progress last month in Beijing.

'A blight on our dream'

A statement issued after the Asean-South Korea summit said Ms Arroyo expressed "solidarity" with efforts to solve the standoff through talks. "The nuclear test of North Korea casts a blight on our dream of one caring and sharing community," she said in the statement.

She added in a statement prepared for the Asean-Japan summit that the region hopes Shinzo Abe's (Oct. 9 nuclear test would not inspire an arms race, particularly with Tokyo.

"It must be anything but that as countries harvesting a nuclear weapon state," the statement said. "But the possession of nuclear weapons by more countries in our region will only lead to greater risks, not less."

The Beijing-Tokyo bond (meeting provided a chance for the three neighbors to mend ties damaged by disputes over several small islands, oil drilling rights and visits by Japanese leaders to a Tokyo war shrine seen by many as a symbol of Japanese militarism.

It was their first trilateral meeting in two years.

"I would like to make an effort to keep building summits with China and South Korea and also to build up better communication and trust with both nations," Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said afterward.

Market of 1.8B people

Plans were set in 2002 for a free trade area with China that will create a huge consumer market and economic activity totaling more than US$2 trillion.

In his opening remarks, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said early Date: 7,000 items had been lowered and the bilateral Chinese trade volume reached US$168 billion in 2006—an increase of 23.4 percent from the previous year.

"On the past year, cooperation in all fields has been carried out in a down-to-earth manner with obvious achievements," he said. "China is very satisfied."

Ms Arroyo described China as Asean's "big brother" which is "important and increasingly role to play in the economic development and security situation of the Asia-Pacific region."

"We also look to China to take the lead in promoting good neighborly relations and regional cooperation by handling sensitive issues with surrounding countries in a manner that is guided by the spirit of equality, respect, consultation and mutual benefit."

Ms Arroyo then convened the Asean-Korea meeting where she focused on the need to "enhance all peaceful means to keep the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free and our region safe and secure." With an AP report

Capiz sees potential market ...

First page A1

ality of the trade between Asean and China," said Rodolfo C. Severino, former Asean secretary general and now senior research fellow of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

"I think opening up the services sector would facilitate trade in general ... so this is quite an important agreement," he told Agence France Presse.

At a first step toward a free trade area, Asean and China signed an agreement on trade in goods in November 2004.

Eventual integration

Lisa Hardtke, deputy director of the Southeast Asia research center at Ohio's Kenyon University, said China deals were important for the eventual integration of Asian markets.

"China and Asean would have a better framework for the promotion of trade ... the economies would be more integrated and the service industries could grow more stably too," he said.

Higher level

She said Asean and Beijing would "saturate bilateral cooperation to an even higher level" in the coming year.

"Politically high-level contacts between the two sides have been done and dialogue and consultations at all levels have been fruitful and effective," he told Inquirer.

Asean has much to gain

With China now answering much of the foreign investment that used to flow into Asian economies, there are some fears that closer trade links could be more of a threat than an opportunity.

But Asean countries have much to gain, Severino said.

"The rise of China is not a zero-sum game and China is beginning to invest in Asean countries too," Severino said.

"There is emphasis about the influx of Chinese goods ... but they weren't larger than Southeast Asia has a surplus with China. The balance of trade is in Southeast Asia's favor."

Asean's top exports to China include electrical equipment, machinery and fuel oil, plastics and rubber—while the region's main imports for China's exports of manufactured goods to third countries.

With China's economic expansion and the free trade zone in place, the country is expected to import more of these products from Asean as its manufacturing continues to grow, experts say.

Regional leaders have also sought to ease worries.

China not a threat

"What we always believe (is) that China has not been a threat ... We have always regarded China as an opportunity," Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters last Thursday at a China-Asean summit.

Under a $20 billion deal announced at the summit, Malaysian state-energy firm Petronas will supply some 3 million tons of natural gas annually to Shanghai over the next 25 years.

For many manufacturers in the Philippines, the impending free trade pact means they must size in the challenge of cheaper Chinese competitors.

"The happy days are over," said Richard Tu, chair of industries at the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"They have to be more creative and efficient ... each entrepreneur has to know how we find a niche."

In Iloilo City, Melinda Fernandez operates mostly half the merchandise in her fashion accessories shop from China these days, because it makes good business sense.

"Lipsticks, stockings, socks ... these are all made in China and they are much cheaper than goods in the market, previously from Japan, which were quite expensive," Fernandez said at her shop in a trendy downtown shopping center. "We want more cheap goods. They satisfy our customer demand."

But China also needs consumers to fuel its industries.

In a breakfast forum in Bacolod City Friday, Emmanuel Ang, the Philippine commercial attaché in Guangdong, noted that China's richest province was importing nearly $100 billion worth of products and services a year.

China has a ready market for agricultural and marine products that can be explored by Philippine companies, government officials said.

To secure its supply of raw materials for its industries, China is also investing in the Philippines and other Asian members.

Ang said China's private sector investments in the Philippines worth P250 million were under final negotiations.

These are in ethanol production, logistics, transportation, services exports, mining and agri-marine sectors. Reports from Felipe L. Gozon, Inquirer Visayas; AFP and Reuters

INVESTING IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN FOR AN INTELLIGENT AND HEALTHY CITIZENRY

By *Rep. Herminio G. Teves* (3rd District, Oriental Negros)

A properly nourished and physically fit citizenry is vital to nation-building and economic growth. Recognizing this, government has to provide a mechanism that will ensure that our human resources — future labor force participants — are not languishing due to hunger. The House of Representatives sought to check pervasive hunger, especially among children, by allotting P4.7 billion for the public school feeding program. The program targets 10 million children, 93 percent of whom are enrolled in public schools. Many of these children belong to households that subsist below the poverty threshold.

The House-approved feeding program allocation has become a highly controversial issue that caused the Bicameral Conference Committee deadlock over the proposed P1,125.0 billion national budget for 2007. While I serve as Chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means, I was, sadly, excluded from the House panel to the Bicameral Committee.

When the budget was still being deliberated upon by the Lower House, I advocated that the allotment for the feeding program **should be spent only on actual feeding activities for school children**, and not disbursed merely on the distribution of rice, as government did in the past.

I pushed hard for the feeding program because I have seen its positive effect on school children in the Third District of Oriental Negros.

The Oriental Negros Feeding Program was launched on the sheer belief that improved nourishment would redound to enhanced scholastic performance. The program was never based on any preconceived biases whatsoever. The goal was simply to cure for our children and build up their mental and physical abilities.

It is tragic that many members of Congress seem to have forgotten what our national hero, Jose Rizal, once said, about the youth being "the hope of our fatherland".

Department of Education (Deped) data show that the cohort survival rate of public elementary school students is deteriorating every year, with a dropout rate of about 32 percent, or even worse in some areas in the countryside.

Besides the increasing dropout rate, government has to address the mediocre performance of students, especially in the core disciplines of Science and Mathematics. The average international scores for Science and Mathematics are 481 and 487, respectively, while the Philippines' mean score is only 345 for both subjects, in the National Achievement Test. Grade 6 student got an average rate of 44.84 percent in Math and 43.08 percent in Science, out of a highest possible score of 100 percent. A review of the regional exam percentage scores would indicate that students in the poorest areas performed the worst.

The Philippine Star editorial of July 5, 2006 attests to the deteriorating academic performance of school children. The editorial noted that **Filipino students ranked near the bottom among 23 countries on the elementary level**, and stressed the need to check the decline in the quality of education. Otherwise, it could take a generation before the nation can recover from the consequences of a poorly educated citizenry. It is said that health and education are the surest ways to climb the socio-economic ladder. But we cannot achieve this vision as long as many of our children are languishing in their homes in hunger, instead of eagerly learning in school.

A number of members of Congress may have overlooked the fact that the dismal scholastic performance of school children is rooted in widespread poverty and severe malnutrition.

In farming, fertilization is necessary in order to achieve a bountiful harvest. The same principle may be applied in addressing malnutrition. Government must have a responsive feeding program that will target public school children.

Another problem that parents have to cope with is the soaring cost of education. Owing to the high cost of tuition, parents have to rely on public schooling, rather than enroll their children in private institutions. This is illustrated by the lopsided enrollment rate between private and public schools. In school year 2005-2006, **a total of 12,982,461 students were is enrolled in public schools**, while only 2,121,385 students enlisted with private institutions. Despite the massive demand for public schooling, Congress has been slow to increase funding support. Thus, the general decline in the quality of basic education.

A United Nations Development Program country assessment of the Philippines bared that government spends an average of only 2 percent of its GNP for every elementary student annually. The inadequate support has led to a massive shortage of classrooms, tables and chairs. There is also a dearth of qualified teachers, which has been aggravated by their inequitable deployment at the local level. It is a common sight to have 100 children cramped in a classroom and sharing books among themselves. The root causes to Deped records supposedly indicating that the teacher-pupil ratio in public elementary schools is 1:35,this school year.

If government cannot adequately provide for the educational needs of the children, what more for their nutritional requirements? More often, children report to school for morning classes with empty stomachs. They are supposed to go home for lunch. But chances are there will be no lunch waiting for them at home. With still-hungry stomachs, many of them are too tired to go back to school. After Grade 3, many will discontinue their schooling, and look for work to support their hungry families. Thus, the vicious cycle of poverty continues such as trend.

This shortcoming in basic education and the weak predisposition of students to learn, due to their poor health and nutrition, have serious implications as they advance in the educational level. According to experts, there is a significant relationship between a child's readiness to learn and how much that child can learn. No matter how much stimulation a child gets, if the child is not developmentally ready to do so, teaching will be a waste of time and effort.

This educational malaise prompted my office and the office of the Governor of Oriental Negros, with the help of some donors, to initiate a pilot school feeding project, the Free Noon Meal Program, in the Third District. The program seeks to address the malnutrition, poor scholastic performance and low school survival rate of students. The community-based program is partly funded by my Priority Development Assistance Fund, with counterpart financing from local governments and donors. In the program, pre-school children are regularly served hot rice topped with glutinous mongo, pechay soup, fried fish (sapsap or dilis) and iodized salt.

Some parents not only bring the vegetables and coconut milk, but also cook the food. Barangay officials provide the kitchen and the utensils. The students themselves bring the thermocol and wash the plates, spoons and glasses.

Besides fostering a sense of community, the children are also taught personal hygiene before lunch. They are also taught good graces through prayers before meals in the vernacular for Grades 1 to 3, and in English for Grades 4 to 6. They are also taught to be thankful to their parents, teachers, local and national leaders and most importantly, to the Lord for the food they eat.

The program has been a huge success. Six months after the program's implementation, the Pre-School Nutrition has certified that the daily school attendance has significantly increased from 85% to 100%. Moreover, most of the children have gained weight, apart from becoming more attentive and smarter to classes.

Because of the resounding success of this feeding program in the Third District of Oriental Negros, I was invited to present the project during the 2006 National School Health Nutrition

Rep. Teves at the launch of the Free Noon Meal Program in Liptong Elementary School

Elementary students enjoy a meal of rice with mongo beans and malunggay leaves under Rep. Teves' Free Noon Meal Program

Congress in Baguio City. The League of Corporate Foundations Inc. (LCF), upon hearing this noble project, also requested a presentation be made to its member foundations.

After presenting the Free Noon Meal Program, with a net cost of only P5.65 per meal per student, and the reported improvement of children's health and mental capabilities, I then proposed a national school feeding program with the help of the LCF. Subsequently, a memorandum of agreement was then forged between my office, the LCF (through its Vice President for Programs, Mr. Alex Escalzo) and Deped, to expand the program.

Deped acted when it gave Congress a free hand in realigning the P4.7 billion for the school feeding program in favor of more classrooms and more teachers.

The extra P3.0 billion that Deped claims it needs to rebuild typhoon-damaged classrooms is overstated. To begin with, the damage was contained only to some areas. Besides, the proposed 2007 budget already includes a P1.76-billion allocation for the construction and repair of schools outside the Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP). The Third District of Negros Oriental is, in fact, a recipient of both the SEDIP and the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP). My office allocated substantial equity for these programs, thus making possible the construction of 140 new classrooms and the repair of 161 classrooms under the TEEP, as well as the construction of 50 new classrooms under SEDIP. Under the Department of Public Works and Highways's regular school building program, another 108 classrooms were built, while 50 forbidden school classrooms were repaired and funded by my PDAF.

Deped's request for 6,000 additional teachers is not statistically supported. Based on Deped data for school year 2005-2006, the actual teacher-pupil ratio funded by the national government is 1:33, excluding teacher aides engaged by local governments.

In deliberating upon the national budget, the primordial concern of Congress should be how to get the maximum benefit from every appropriation. I am totally convinced that solid investments in our school children deserve the highest priority, since they will be turning this country once we are long gone. Their physical and mental requirements can best be served with the Free Noon Meal Program. Thus, the budget for this program should be approved with the 2007's budget. Scrapping the program would be tantamount to depriving our children adequate care and nutrition.

STATISTICAL DATA FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REGION	Total Teaching & Non-Teaching Personnel	Elementary Enrollment	Teacher: Non-Teacher Ratio
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Weary Realtors crush Barako

Pingris lifts Giants past Pals

By Mussing R. Castillo

STA. LUCIA IS TIRED—OF LOSING

The Realtors pumped the guts out Red Bull last night and then hit timely baskets in the stretch for a 96-90 victory at the Ynares Coliseum and a 1-0 lead in their Sek N Yut Philippine Cup quarterfinal series.

Sta. Lucia built a commanding lead early, not showing signs of fatigue despite coming off four games in six nights (two OTs), to completely take the Bandits by surprise and gain a headstart in their interesting pairing.

"It was all over the papers (today), that we are injured and [that we are] a tired team," Sta. Lucia coach Alfrancis Chua said. "Yes, we're tired. We're tired of losing."

With an inspired Mark Pingris leading the way, Purefoods ran walking Talk 'N 'Text down to size, later to post an 89-84 win over the Phone Pals for a similar headstart in their sequence series.

Pingris, the hard-working forward who on Friday got to talk to his father for the first time in 25 years, sustained 19 points, hauled down 17 rebounds and swatted away five enemy shots to prove to be the difference.

"I think no one expected us to win but our seniors," Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said. "The odds are stacked against us. There's nothing [to lose with that role. It's just 1-0, and you need to win three games to win this series."

Pacho Mendoza hit two triples and Marlon Aquino eight of his 10 points in the first quarter to jump-start the Sta. Lucia offensive as the Realtors erected double-digit leads right in the first four minutes and never looked.

The Realtors dropped 37 points in the first period and went 28 points up at the half, 63-35, a huge enough buffer that outlasted a mighty Red Bull comeback anchored on small forwards Cyrus Baguio and Sunday Salamanca.

"Of course, they will come back," Chua said of Red Bull. "We still have games to play. The only time Red Bull doesn't make a comeback is when this series is over. Otherwise, that team will keep on trying."

Despite the setback, and despite how hard he's been played in the first half, Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao still looked and sounded optimistic.

"Obviously, there was some rust there," Guiao said, in explaining his team's poor first half. "At least now, we've got time. Our confidence is still high. I guess we have to pay the price for coming off such a long rest."

The scores:

First Game

STA. LUCIA 96—Mendoza 19, Williams 17, Salvador 16, Espino 11, Aquino 10, Calimag 6, Corvadon 5, Dionisio 5, Pinpin 5.

RED BULL 90—Valenzuela 19, Baguio 16, Sharma 13, Jurado 11, Salamanca 9, Villanueva 6, Najorda 4, Bugia 3, Alvarez 2, Feldstein 2, Cruz 2, Mendoza 2.

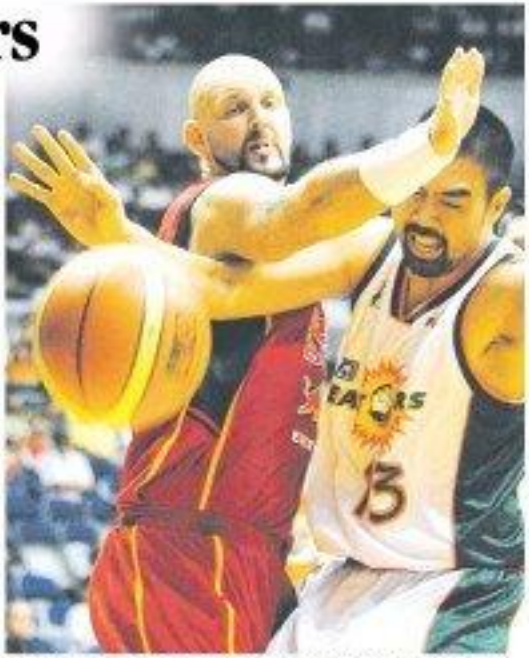
Quarters: 37-22, 54-35, 81-61, 96-90.

Second Game

PUREFOODS 89—Pingris 19, Ing 17, 10, Raymundo 12, Tiu 9, Hrabosky 8, Yee 5, Arboleda 5, Castillo 3, Lloyd 3, Demeni 3, Salvador 2.

TALK N' TEXT 84—Tolentino 20, Belle 12, Rhoads 12, Cardona 8, Cruz 8, De Guzman 8, Washington 7, Abrigo 7, Palma 7, Mallari 2.

Quarters: 20-24, 42-35, 72-60, 89-84.



STA. LUCIA's Jeunepole Marlon Aquino (right) gets entangled with Red Bull big man Mick Pennisi in a battle for the loose ball in last night's quarterfinal game between the Realtors and the Bandits. AUGE GUAGLE

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CEBU PACIFIC

Canadian sitcom shows funny side of Muslims

News page A3

slim television and spectacular ratings.

The television show parodies the acclaimed US drama "Little House on the Prairie" (1974-83), which starred Michael Landon and Melissa Gilbert, about the life and adventures of the Ingalls family in the 19th century American West.

But instead of raising pitchforks, rattling down bills and selling eggs at the general store, this Muslim family struggles to cope in a fictional town in Saskatchewan, in a past-Sept. 11, 2001, world.

The show mocks Muslim townsfolks' efforts to establish a mosque in a mostly Protestant whistle stop, and pokes fun at their attempts to integrate into neighborhood life.

"It's a sitcom and not a political satire," said Zarqa Nawaz, the hijab (veil)-wearing creator of the show. See the Liverpool-born Ghanaian, practicing Muslim and mother of four also hopes the show will help dispel stereotypes and misperceptions about her religion that mounted after the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacks on the United States.

"Since 9/11, what we see on the news mostly every day portrays Muslims in terms of conflict. It tends to create a one-dimensional perception of a very diverse community," she said.

The series includes clever issues-based one.

Enemy in the kitchen

In conversations meant, for instance, were changes to Muslims lacking everywhere. "The enemy is in your kitchen," she tells his bemused congregation. "White guns, rye bread, liberties...Western traps designed to seduce Muslims to drink alcohol."

A young lawyer, who gives up a promising career in Toronto to become the new Imam (prayer) leader, is pulled aside at the airport after he is overheard talking on a cell phone about correct outside and the new job that he "Allah's plan for me."

"You're not going to jumbo today," says a security guard, dragging the man out of the line.

Terrorists don't dance

"Laughter is a universal language," said Nawaz, whose previous films include "BBQ Muslims" and "Real Terrorists Don't Belly Dance."

"It's important to get over this assumption that Muslims are not funny or they can't take a joke or that we don't have the same sort of relationships that anyone else would have," she said.

"Little Mosque" is based on her own experiences as a Muslim growing up in Toronto and now living in Regina, the capital of Saskatchewan province.

The series aired by Canadian broadcasting Corp. (CBC) premiered a lot of attention even before its first episode. The buzz was likely due more to the idea of controversy rather than any real daring in the program.

Think outside mosque

Rumors that CBC hired a consultant to ensure Muslim sensibilities were not offended—satirist, according to Nawaz—only fanned the speculation.

"Muslims aren't really worried because times in the media surrounding us have been bad. We've moved toward tolerance," said Nawaz, whose production company, 9VNDimensional Films, promises to put the "fun back into fundamentalism."

The program has met with a guarded reception from some in the Muslim community who are grateful to see a toned image of Muslims on television, but also wary about the creation of other misconceptions.

"It's a beginning, we've never had any comedy shows put us about the Muslim community," said Wahida Valiante, national vice president of the Canadian Islamic Congress. "Maybe they need to shift their focus just from the mosque. Muslims aren't really that much involved every day of their life in the mosque."

Best show in years

The cloths and third newspaper praised the show's pilot episode as the best that CBC has produced in years.

The paper called it "a grand slam assertion that Canadian television is different and that the best of Canadian television amounts to a rejection of the hegemony of US network television."

Despite the material, "Little Mosque" is a quintessentially Canadian show—gentle humor, quirky small-town characters, Toronto backdrop, new immigrants—which would make it difficult for the producers to sell it abroad.

The creators say they have received calls from broadcasters in the United States, Europe and the Middle East who expressed interest in taking the show and, in some cases, buying the format rights.

The program drew 2.1 million viewers in its debut, surpassing average CBC show viewership of 500,000 to 1 million, according to Kirsten Layfield, CBC's executive director of network programming. *Reports from Reuters and AFP*

OGCC reports fundamental improvements for stronger legal service in 2006

The Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) accelerated its growth last year to line with the President's goal to establish a strong republic. By increasing the standards of legal service with an advocacy for good corporate governance and corporate social responsibility, OGCC led the way for its client corporations - the Government Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) - to operate with more efficiency, attain a balanced budget, and contribute to the ever-all improvement in the conditions of public service by the National Government. This was made possible through the able leadership of Government Corporate Counsel (GCC) Agnes VST Devanadera, under whose stewardship OGCC was transformed into the legal institution for progress and development, thereby gaining another significant milestone for GOCCs.

OGCC improved its administrative support system by giving the staff adequate training on information technology and increasing the ratio of the number of computers to lawyers and staff

Since OGCC is more than 70 years old in existence, GCC Devanadera continued the legacy of her predecessors in building blocks for the institution. What she did is to bring in the dimension of a responsive legal service in light of the dynamism of the corporate world that cannot be parochially viewed within the geographical and political boundaries of a nation. She anchored all changes in the mission on legal fundamentals and thereby strengthened the institution as well as the people in it.

The transformation began when OGCC started laying cornerstones for achieving legal excellence by carrying out capability-building programs and activities. She ensured that lawyers their legal skills in alternative dispute resolution, new requirements under the procurement law, jurisprudential developments involving real property taxation, and recent Supreme Court decisions and rules on contemporary issues and matters of current developments in corporations, privatizations thereof and investments thereon. The capability building trainings and seminars were also attended by in-house counsels of GOCCs.

At the same time, OGCC improved its administrative support system by giving the staff adequate training on information technology and increasing the ratio of the number of computers to lawyers and staff. These were undertaken to prepare the men and women of OGCC with the opening of its new website at www.ogcc.gov.ph.

Alongside the capability building efforts was the consistent implementation of the Issue Handling Policy that requires the legal and the administrative staff to finish their work load on time. In its report to the House of Representatives, the OGCC indicated that it disposed of all pending requests for opinion and contract review thereby attaining a zero backlog and an increased efficiency rate of 174 percent in terms of considering the validation of legal services to GOCCs despite lack of resources, particularly manpower. OGCC's vigor in carrying out its duty was further bolstered when the Supreme Court on August 1, 2006 in the case of Land Bank of the Philippines vs. Benedicto Bacilio Lacsamana, affirmed OGCC's statutory role as the principal legal counsel of GOCCs. The high court emphasized that the legal department of a GOCC such as the LBP cannot prosecute cases alone. The court said "If the [10 Legal Department has long operated as an independent fiefdom absent any control, supervision, or even concern from the OGCC, then this practice must end now"

In less than three (3) years in the helm, GCC Devanadera has successfully prosecuted several important cases for its client corporations, the most notable of which is the case between Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) and the City of Parañaque, where the Supreme Court upheld the exemption of government instrumentalities from real estate taxes and other fees and charges imposed by LGUs.

"MIAA is a government instrumentality vested with corporate powers and performing essential public services pursuant to Section 2(10) of the Introductory Provisions of the Administrative Code. As a government instrumentality, MIAA is not subject to any kind of tax by local governments under Section 133 (o) of the Local Government Code".

With the victory in the MIAA case, the OGCC is will be able to channel billions of their funds to the state economic activities as mandated by their charter and thereby generate more job opportunities for the communities and funds for the national government.

In his Column in the Manila Bulletin, Richard J. Gluma opined that the "OGCC's positions" in the case are "wise". He says "Government's social services and functions provided by such instrumentalities would not be reduced, diminished, or hampered by their having to pay taxes to local government units. Furthermore, government would have the advantage of being able to use funds by whole chunks, as compared to smaller and marginal tax payments that each local government unit would severally obtain. As a result, the public has benefited more from the OGCC's participation in the case."

Aside from ensuring that some of GOCCs are efficiently and successfully prosecuted and/or defended, OGCC has also been at the forefront of efforts to safeguard all transactions that GOCCs are involved in, particularly ensuring transparency, integrity, and order in the bidding process. Proof of this commitment and action to the interests of the selection process in the Assignment of BPMPH to Mayaman Services, Inc. From day one of the process until its successful conclusion, GCC Devanadera enrolled by-stood by her commitment to make the process work for the benefit of the entire consumers in the Mira Consumers because right to the court, she had adopted the conviction that "FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION" in the bidding process.

Significantly, pivotal to the success of the selection process were the creative legal solutions undertaken by its corporate counsel particularly on the legal battle submitted to the Rehabilitation Court presided by Regional Trial Court of Quezon City. Upholding the position of the OGCC, Judge Dewey denied an Omnibus Motion dated July 5, 2007 (that "the super majority rights of the Steel Group, as currently embodied in the by-laws of Mayaman Water Services, Inc., be declared no longer applicable because of changed circumstances upon completion of the capital restructuring and that such by-laws must be amended to conform to standard provisions required by the Securities and Exchange Commission for by-laws of Philippine corporations unless a new shareholders' agreement is executed." This favorable decision of the rehabilitation court on the legal propositions of OGCC, as the statutory legal counsel of BPMPH, ensures the completion of the selection process.

But the more far-reaching legacy of GCC Devanadera is the issuance of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the OGCC.

GCC Devanadera says The "IRR of OGCC integrates and implements OGCC's mandate of helping client GOCCs function productively, efficiently, and responsibly. It shall serve as the guiding principle in resolving legal conflicts and in responding to the problems, issues and needs of client GOCCs." Consistent with the principle of keeping up with the dynamism of the corporate world, the new rental is the settlement of disputes, and in line with the reinstitution act by the Supreme Court, the OGCC IRR included an entire section on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The adds "ADR has already been put to test in actual cases pending before the OGCC and some of these cases are almost to be resolved." It was attended by no less than Executive Secretary Eduardo N. Ermita, and Cora Syndicate, and Justice Secretary Raul M. Gonzalez, who both conveyed their pride and support for having witnessed the transformations undertaken within OGCC.

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Leviste aide was shot several times

Officials correct earlier report that victim was shot only once

By Tarra Quismundo

MAKATI POLICE OFFICIALS yesterday confirmed that Rafael de los Reyes, the aide of Batangas Gov. Vilma Leviste, was shot not only once, but several times.

Leviste, who is confined at the Makati Medical Center for a heart condition, had admitted that he shot De los Reyes on Friday in self-defense.

Supt. Gilbert Cruz, Makati police chief, Chief Insp. Manny Santos, head of the Intelligence and Investigation section and Chief Investigator Senior Insp. Jessie Isnap, Rihanda Pendatun, told the Inquirer that contrary to earlier reports, De los Reyes sustained multiple gunshot wounds in the face and head.

But they have yet to ascertain whether the victim had been shot three or four times as the autopsy report has yet to be released.

The body of De los Reyes, who resided in Leviste's office on the ninth floor of the UPL Towers on Legaspi Street, Makati City on Friday, Leviste later surrendered to Mayor Jejomar Binay at the Makati Medical Center where he was admitted for high blood pressure.

The former governor and reelected battlemail of Sen. Loren Legarda has since been under round-the-clock police watch.

Police all set

Although Leviste has yet to issue a statement on the incident, Cruz said that they were pushing through with the filing of charges against him this morning at the Makati City Prosecutor's Office.

According to Cruz, there was a possibility that the charges against the former official could be downgraded to murder, instead of homicide.

"We are still deliberating what charges will be filed pending results of the investigation. But it can be elevated to murder depending on the account of witnesses and how (some of the Cotton Operatives) investigation," he told the Inquirer.

As defined in the Revised Penal Code, murder is a crime committed "with treachery," "with evident premeditation," "with cruelty" and by "employing means to weaken the defense ... of persons in distress or afford impunity." Depending on the circumstances, it is punishable by a 20-year prison term or death.

Homicide, on the other hand, is committed without prior intent and could be a consequence of a scuffle or an accident. It is punishable by a prison term of 12 to 20 years.

"It can be elevated because of the number of gunshot wounds the victim sustained and because nobody could corroborate his claim that it was self-defense. In any case, he is considered a suspect in a killing and his status for the police is that he is under arrest," Cruz said.

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Magdalo lawyer to run for Congress

By DJ Yap

BELMONTE

ON THE LAST TWO occasions that lawyer Jose Globenghor "Ed" Belmonte made the headlines, he had just been arrested with junior Army officers in the run from the government.

Now, he wants to dig his own into politics—an improvement, first of Quezon City—in a move that could put his uncle, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr., on the spot.

"I know this is going to put my uncle in an awkward position, but I'm seriously considering a run for congressman of District II," Ed told the Inquirer in an interview.

The younger Belmonte is facing a rebellion case on top of charges for illegal possession of firearms and explosives pending before courts in Makati and Quezon City.

In two separate incidents last year, he was caught in the company of suspected junior officers belonging to the "Magdalo Group" which had staged the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny in Makati City.

Ed said he was one of the group's many lawyers. "I became really, really close to them as the years that we were like brothers," he told the Inquirer.

He said there was a chance that the mayor, who is allied with the administration party, would opt to support incumbent Rep. Mary Ann Susano, who will seek a second term.

"I may have to run as an independent. My uncle also has to keep his word to the incumbent," Ed said in a mix of English and Filipino. He added, "I'm used to fighting losing battles, anyway."

The younger Belmonte said any candidate's chances of winning District II rest on whoever gets the blessings of his uncle. "From my consultations with local officials ... they all love him. So whoever gets his backing is almost the sure winner," he added.

Ed admitted that his previous "brushes" with the law may also somehow help his campaign. "For one, I already have name recall. For another, many people sympathize with my cause. Then again, many would also be afraid," he added.

NBI installs more payment kiosks

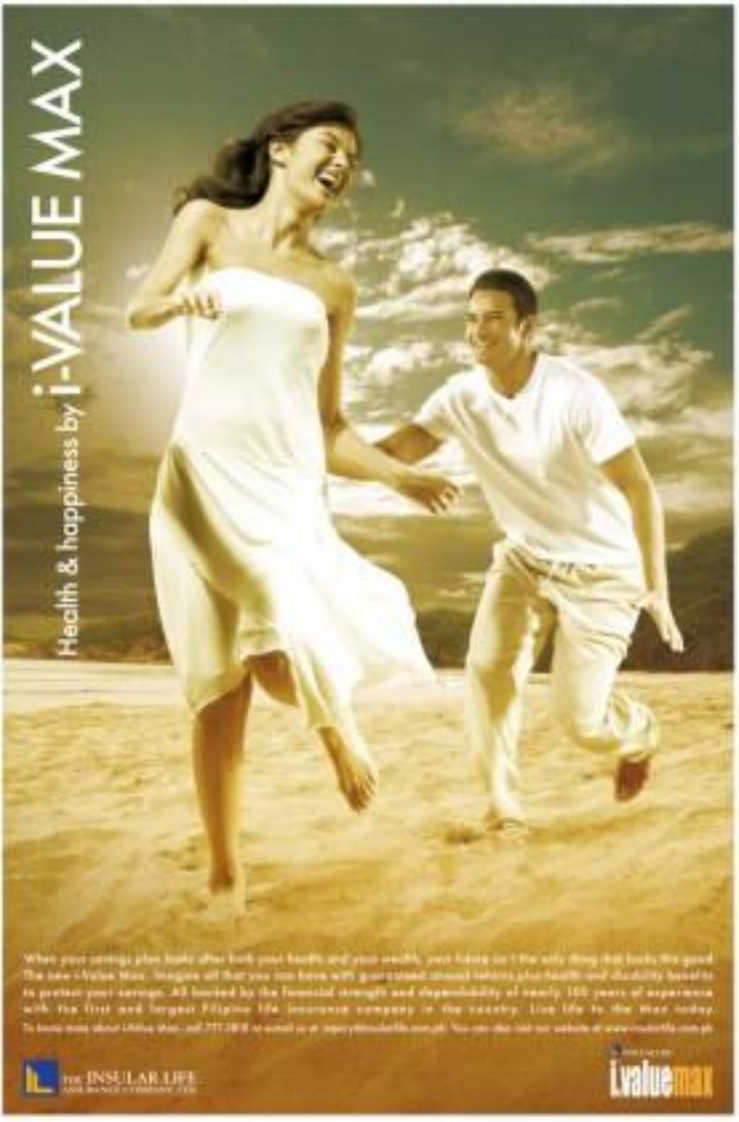
By Marguie C. Ortiz

DUE TO A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE number of applicants, the National Bureau of Investigation will be putting up more automated clearance payment kiosks at its clearance center in Ermita, Manila.

NBI Director Nestor Mantaring said the bureau processed and issued 4.4 million clearance certificates last year compared to 4.1 million in 2005.

Mantaring explained that with the automated clearance kiosks, applicants could immediately pay the clearance fee without going through the hassle of waiting in long lines.

The automated kiosks work like automated teller machines. Applicants can pay the clearance fee by inserting the exact amount—P115—into specialized slots.



INSTANT BUS TERMINAL

Inquirer reader Jeff, a 17-year-old resident of Pasay City, sent a text message to Citizen's Call about his observation on the traffic situation in the Roxas Boulevard area. His message read: "Attention Metropolitan Manila Development Authority and Pasay City traffic enforcers: Dagdagan ang bus terminal ang Taft Avenue/Boulevard malapit sa Baclaran church. Grabe ang traffic sa lugar na 'yan!"

METRO Citizen's call
0918-8985566

I TOOOOT-if we have a bad antitheses. Is the sturdy of UM North Edsa exemplary?
—EDDIE TIU, Manila

Heavy police trucs to watch the chakra between vendors and the MMDA and their goon in the scene when the fight is over.
—JAMES, 27, Pasay City

Gusto ko lang po humingi ng isang bata pwede magpaawa ng pansin ang baba dito sa tulay sa may Aurora Extension, Sta. Mesa, Manila. Kawawa naman, baka ma sa pa ngad. Maraming salamat po sa aksyon. Mabuhay sa inyo ang mga bata na ito at patuloy po sa mga tulad ninyo. Sana matulungan ng husto.
—ELEANOR P. ALFREC, 61, Mesa Extension, Sta. Mesa, Manila

Motorists from Sherwin Green Village/West Service Road along South Luzon Expressway have to endure every day a traffic jam that is almost two hrs. motorcycling due to illegal PUCC traffic enforcers at the Alcabo intersection.
—JOEY M. TUS, 58, Makati

Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte's ornament at the corner of Congressional & Mindanao Avenues are blocking the traffic lights.
—JHANN MONSAL, 22, Quezon City

DID YOU KNOW

On Jan. 15, 1995, Pope John Paul II spoke before two to five million Filipinos who attended the World Youth Day celebration at Rizal Park. It was said to be the largest crowd in this country ever. World Youth Day is an annual event participated in by people aged 15 to 35 from over 170 countries.

—Jyril L. Escalante, Inquirer Research

Art Deco buildings thrive on FEU campus

Special marker citing heritage structures' architect installed on Jan. 25

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE STRUCTURES SERVE AS A reminder of a prosperous time in the 1930s, when technology was king and the future was found-ism.

Weathering time and the devastations wrought by World War II, a cluster of five buildings—home not of a renowned sentiment's extraordinary creative talent and a pioneering private education's vision—has been recognized for preserving a special architecture and style.

The buildings, housing the elementary Art Deco architecture of the 1920s, still stand proudly on the Far Eastern University (FEU) campus in Manila.

The university was given a National Heritage Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) Asia Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage in 2005 for the outstanding preservation of its Art Deco structures.

"The Unesco award was crucial in recognize private institutions that managed to preserve heritage buildings which are more than 50 years old," FEU Center for Studies on the Urban Environment (CSUE) executive director Joel Ocdo told the Inquirer in an interview.

Designed by National Artist Juan Arellano, Pedro Antonio, the five structures are the Nicanor Reyes Hall, FEU East Asia College of Engineering and Computer Studies, the Law and Nursing Building, Auditorium-Administration Building and the Science Building.

After studying architecture in London, Arellano was one of those who introduced the Art Deco style in the Philippines, according to Ocdo.

"The Art Deco movement essentially flirts in the 'he-ne-ly' 1920s," explained the FEU official who is also an architectural designer and researcher.

He said the new style was the movement's answer to the neoclassical architecture predominant during the time.

"The old style was patterned after Greek and Roman temples characterized by huge pillars and ornate designs," Ocdo said, citing the Post Office building and the National Museum in Manila as examples of neo-classical structures.

NICANOR REYES HALL, the "flagship" building of the FEU Manila Campus, was named after the university's founder.

The Art Deco style, in contrast, was characterized by rounded corners, clean and basic geometric forms, grooves and elements from Egyptian art.

"It essentially depicted the advent of progressive modernization and technology borrowing and adapting the streamline forms of cars and other technological products that were gaining popularity during that time," Ocdo said.

The new style also reflected the designs of big ships—including railings and portholes details. The "streamship" style is evident in the Nicanor Reyes Hall, FEU's flagship building, according to Ocdo.

Art Deco, which was how people envisioned the future, flourished just before the Great Depression," the FEU official added.

Upon completing one of his major early works, the Ideal Theater on Real Avenue in Manila, Arellano was commissioned by FEU founder Nicanor Reyes to construct a school building that would eventually house the university's library and Institute of Accounting, Business and Finance.

Reyes, who obtained his doctor's degree in accounting at Columbia University in New York, had just returned to the country to establish a school for Filipino accountants.

"He wanted to empower Filipinos so because professionals become most of the accountants during that time were foreigners," Ocdo said.

The Nicanor Reyes Hall, constructed in 1939, first symbolized the newfound progressive ideas of Filipino reformers during the American era.

Arellano later designed four more buildings: the Girls' High School Building in 1940, Boys' High School Building in 1941, the Auditorium-Administration Building in 1949, and the Science Building in 1950.

The Girls' High School, comprised adaptation of the Western Art Deco style with its thin concrete slabs running parallel to the window ledges, was later transformed into the FEU East Asia College.

The Boys' High School, a mirror image of the girls' building, eventually became the Law and Nursing Building.

The Science Building, on the other hand, exemplified the transition from the Art Deco style to the post-World War II international style. While Art Deco's streamlined geometry was still evident, the building's design was simplified to suggest the clean, neat surfaces of the new style, according to Ocdo.

Other structures on the FEU campus that showcase the "streamlined" style of the 1930s include the FEU Chapel, the FEU Hospital, and the Arts and Sciences Building.

Apart from its prized buildings, the university also takes pride in its landscape architecture, which features on the Nicanor Reyes Memorial Square and its collection of bronze sculptures by National Artist Napoleon Abueva.

Ocdo said prominent artists Fernando Amorsolo and Carlos "Botong" Francisco were also commissioned to work on paintings that were later displayed at the university's Administration Building and chapel.

"The university has been able to preserve its buildings because as a private institution, it places a sense of importance to this structure as part of the Filipino people's heritage," the FEU official told the Inquirer.

Apart from the Unesco award, the university will also display a special marker recognizing Arellano's exceptional merits on Jan. 25.

"The Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) will install the marker in recognition of the architectural legacies of National Artists like Arellano," Ocdo said.

TREE FACADE of the FEU East Asia College showcases the typical Art Deco style of geometric forms and rounded corners.

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10-year-old girl killed in mishap

By Edson C. Tavoc Jr.

A 10-YEAR-OLD GIRL WAS KILLED WHILE three other persons were hurt when the driver of a passenger jeepney lost control of his vehicle as it was going down the flyover in Meycauayan City shortly before noon yesterday.

The flyover is not on steep but its days ago, another accident occurred in the area, this time involving a delivery truck whose driver said he also lost control of his vehicle as it was crossing down the flyover.

The passenger jeep had just come from San Juan and Cubao, Quezon City and was on its way to Hill Village in Marikina.

But while traveling on the flyover toward Bonifacio Avenue, driver Francisco Lithaluna, 35, lost control of the jeep, which was loaded with several passengers, city traffic head Insp. Felipe Evangelista told the Inquirer.

Lithaluna said he stepped on the brakes, but his jeepney did not slow down. It first hit the passenger jeepney it was riding before slamming into another jeepney, crossing to the opposite lane and hitting a fifth jeepney, Evangelista added.

Lithaluna's jeepney, however, continued to run. It went up on the sidewalk where several people were walking.

The jeepney ran over 10-year-old Maria Princess Morata, killing her instantly. She was just walking near her house, Evangelista said.

Ricky Martinez and his cousin, Ariel Arid, both 23, were also hit and sustained minor injuries. They were brought to the Amang Rodriguez Medical Center for treatment, while Lithaluna voluntarily surrendered after the accident, Evangelista added.

His days ago, a truck full of soft drinks also went down the flyover crashed into a store on Bonifacio Avenue.

Driver Roland Neo, 32, and his helper Jessie dela Cruz, 34, sustained minor bruises. Neo said his brakes malfunctioned as he decided to steer the vehicle away from pedestrians and passenger jeeps to avoid hurting others.

The WORLD

Lilac Lorraine B. Osorio

Thousands ignored tsunami warnings

TOKYO—THOUSANDS OF JAPANESE IGNORED evacuation orders as earthquake-triggered tsunami warnings, raising concerns among officials about future disaster management, major newspapers reported Sunday.

A magnitude 8.2 earthquake struck off northern Japan on Saturday, prompting tsunami warnings until sending those newly fleeing to higher ground but causing no reported injuries or damage. Thousands of others ignored the warnings.

Japan's Meteorological Agency lifted all tsunami warnings by late Saturday and local authorities lifted all evacuation orders for thousands of coastal residents.

Japan's rustic northern island of Hokkaido had earlier issued evacuation orders for 65,000 coastal residents in 22 towns due in three of billed waves, said preliminary (GMA7) official Red Times.

But only a fraction of them turned up at designated shelters, major newspapers including the Yomiuri and the Mainichi said Sunday.

In Abashiri City less than 30 percent of the 9,000 residents used designated shelters, the Yomiuri said, quoting Vice Mayor Mitsunori Suzuki.

"I'm afraid many people are losing their guard against tsunami warnings," he said.

The town of Rishiri recorded the worst turnout of 0.25 percent of its 17,000 coastal residents, the Mainichi said. Many people apparently stayed home, considering the news of TV.

The reports blasted senseless tsunami warnings in November in the region, which produced only small waves at a remote Pacific island hours later, for causing a "cry-wolf" effect.

The Meteorological Agency issues tsunami warnings even when only quakes are expected. Japan's populated coastlines are fitted with loudspeakers to order tsunami evacuations, and public broadcaster NHK immediately shuts off regular programs to serve as a disaster information channel.

The routine was implemented after a 1993 quake off Hokkaido generated a tsunami that hit a tiny nearby island. The waves and quake triggered fires killed 200 people.

Saturday's quake occurred near the Kuril Trench, about 300 km east of Severo island, the largest of a disputed four-island chain known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the Kuril Islands in Russia. It was about 30 km below the seabed, the agency said.

The largest wave of 40 centimeters (16 inches) hit Chichi-jima, an island of 2,000 people about 1,000 km south of Tokyo, hours later. Small tidal swells were observed elsewhere. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

Asia on high alert for bird flu resurgence

SEOUL—Asian nations have stood their alert level as four people died bird flu in Indonesia last week. China and South Korea reported new human infections, and the virus has spread across Burma in Myanmar's southern Mekong Delta. The deaths and new poultry outbreaks are signs the virus could make a resurgence this northern winter, health experts warn. While most Asian countries are better prepared than they were a year ago to prevent or contain the spread of avian influenza, epidemiologists say there is no room for complacency about the virus that remains widespread in the region. "The concern is still there," said Hans Troedsson, head of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Vietnam, where after a one-year hiatus bird flu has spread across dozens of farms in six southern provinces in mere months. "What we see as indicators of ...not only in Vietnam with the poultry outbreaks, but also with the human cases in China and Indonesia and now in—is that the virus is still there," he said. AFP

Freezing weather grips central US

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri—A crippling winter storm limited the central United States with another blast of freezing rain, sleet and snow, causing widespread power outages and tying up highways and airports. The storm was expected to continue through the weekend, laying down a coat of ice and snow from Texas to Illinois, where an ice storm warning was in effect through Monday morning. "We're in the midst of a little storm," said Joe Phillips, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in St. Louis. "Today was the first of three waves." Farther west, frigid winter air reached as far south as northern and central California, where snowplow temperatures prompted worry about the homeless and crops. The storm in the Midwest has been blamed for at least seven deaths, and brought passenger train service in Missouri to a halt on Saturday. Interstate and other state-maintained roads in the weight of ice blocked tracks at several locations between St. Louis and Kansas City. AP

India, Pakistan peace hopes brighter after talks

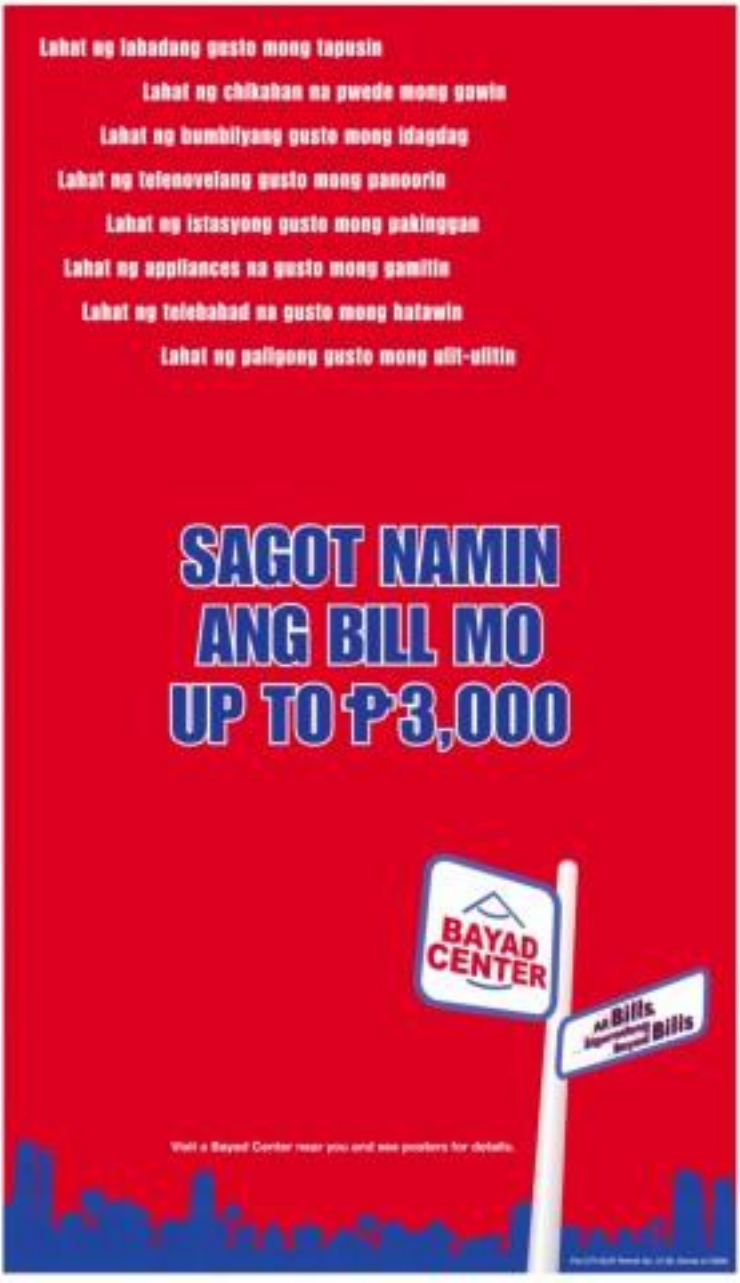
ISLAMABAD—Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee met Pakistani political party leaders on Sunday, in the latest effort that revealed a new phase in a three-year old peace process that has yet to resolve any territorial disputes. Mukherjee, who was defense minister until October, is the first Indian foreign minister to have visited Pakistan in 13 months, and while there seemed little concrete to show on Saturday there were optimistic pronouncements by the two sides' media. "There is a new level of atmosphere. There is greater hope. There is greater realization on the part of both sides, and we have to work out something concrete across out," said Niaz Masood, a former army general turned analyst. After Saturday's talks it was announced Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri will visit India in February to see three more confidence building measures. According to reduce risks of nuclear-related accidents, to ease restrictions on visa applicants and to speed up the return of people detained for accidentally crossing the border will be signed. Reuters

Bush defends new Iraq strategy

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush challenged lawmakers skeptical of his new Iraq plan to propose their own strategy for stopping the violence in Baghdad. "To oppose every thing while proposing nothing is irresponsible," Bush said Saturday. In a plea to lawmakers and the American people, Bush said that Iraqis will keep the onus on the Iraqi government to take charge of security and reach political reconciliation. Democratic lawmakers and his fellow Republicans who oppose that Bush is sending 21,000 more US troops into Iraq at the same minutes. "We have a new strategy with a new mission helping secure the population, especially in Baghdad," Bush said in his weekly radio address. "Our plan puts Iraqis in the lead." AP

Anti-ETA protests in Spain draw 150,000

MADRID—Hundreds of thousands of people took part in peace rallies on Saturday in Madrid and in the Basque city of Bilbao to protest a deadly attack two weeks ago by the armed Basque separatist group ETA. Nearly 150,000 people staged a march through the Spanish capital under the banner "For peace, against terrorism," according to the city council. A further 80,000 gathered in Bilbao, police said. Both demonstrations were a protest on an ETA bombing at a car park at Madrid airport on Dec. 30 that killed two Ecuadorians and drew a halt in efforts by Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero to negotiate a lasting peace in the Basque region. AP



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WHAT'S INSIDE

- So draws Viet GM as Torre takes 1st loss/A30

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

- Wade turns up heat for Miami/A31

EFREN "Bata" Reyes banks close to P1 million for the win.

Reyes master of table; Luat second in 9-ball

EFREN "BATA" REYES TOWED A 1-2-3 FILIPINO FINish in the overall race and crowned himself Master of the Table on Saturday in the 2007 Derby City Classic at the Executive West Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

Reyes, the 1999 World Pool champion, topped the one-pocket event and placed second to Taiwan-ese Steve Moore in the 9-ball leader to pocket the $20,000 (P974,000) champion's purse.

Reyes beat compatriots Rodolfo "Boy Samson" Luat and Francisco "Django" Bustamante en the top bonus prize.

Luat bowed to Efren Peñaa, 7-6, in the 9-ball finals on Saturday and settled for the runner-up prize of $8,400 and a bonus of $3,000 for winding up second to Reyes.

Bustamante won $2,000 for placing third in the Master of the Table race.

Luat, the 30-year-old US Open champion, was ousted by American David Howes in the eighth round but made it back to the Derby 9-ball tournament via the unique event's Duy-In option, in which he paid for a re-entry slot for US$100.

He then defeated Larry Nevel, Shannon Murphy, Thomas Helmuson, Gabe Owen, Bustamante and Peñaa, in that order, to reach the finals.

Peñaa won the leg in the finals and raced to an early 2-0 lead but Luat got one back after his foe scratched on the break.

An empty Luat break in the fourth rack allowed Peñaa to take a 3-1 lead before the Dasmarinas won the fifth on a golden break, 4-1. Luat came back into the game on silky shots and pulled even, 5-5, after an empty Peñaa break.

The Dasmarinas reached the hill, 6-5, after winning a battle for safety on Luat's break, but the Filipino made it full hill after Peñaa missed the 2-7 combo.

Another safety battle for the 2-ball ensued in the final rack and Peñaa won it after Luat failed to make contact with the 2-ball on a tricky kicking.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor

Cabahug, Intal rise to the occasion

By Jasmine W. Payo

TWO AMATEUR STARS SHRAFTED life into what turned like a pair of dwindling PBL campaigns.

With sniper Cherrie Cabahug at the helm, Imperial pulled off back-to-back stunners to stay in the hunt for an outright semifinal berth in the Silver Cup.

Harbour Centre also found hope in JCloud to remain in the running for the bonus given to the top two teams at the end of the classification phase.

Intal and Cabahug, named Players of the Week by the league earlier, put behind their team's erratic starts by powering their squads to consecutive wins yesterday.

Cabahug, a 6-foot-2 shooter from Arlington University, poured his game-high 30 points to lift the Spurks to an 82-80 triumph versus Hotshots Sister Jet Tuesday.

But apparently, it was just symbolic to receive merchandise/promotional prizes instead.

Four days later, the Spurks brought down league-leading Mak-and Mort with an 81-71 victory as Cabahug dished with 25 markers.

"He's really capable," said coach Louie Alas after the Spurks won three games in a row and halted the Cement clo-game roll, the longest in the conference.

On the other hand, Intal took charge as the Bee Masters' thrilling double-overtime win versus the Tele-Tech Titans, 95-93, last Saturday.

"It's his breakout game," said Harbour Centre coach Jorge Gallent.

Intal fired 17 of his 27 points in the two extra periods to lead the Port Masters to their fourth straight win.

Toyota Otis and Harbour Centre now share second place with Strider Clima and Hapee (9-3) at 6-3. All four teams still have a shot at the automatic semifinal slot along with Mak-and Mort.

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PHARAOH

UNFAZED Ma. Regina Gastiglia returns an overhead against Trixie Aparente when she stunned, 9-6, 7-5, to clag the girls' 14-under crown. INQUIRER

Cordero, Olivarez lead net champs

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE YOUNG TURKS OF LOCAL tennis are finally making their presence felt.

Polarong Pandanon champion Iyla Cordero and stunned Sibalom Olivarez Delli made a strong impression yesterday after beating their foes and taking their respective divisions in the 16th Andaluia Cup age-group championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

The 13-year-old Cordero bested second-seed Leander Lazaro, 6-4, 2-6, 6-0, to clinch the 14-under championship, his third title in a row.

Olivarez, also of former medical players Ian and Edna Olivarez, nailed the 16-under crown after fifth-seed Regine Santiago defended the final she lost to Cordero.

It was an anti-climatic first title victory for the 13-year-old Olivarez, who entered a star on Saturday by handling one top seed Sarah Jane Lim in the semifinals.

Santiago, nevertheless, went home with the 16-under title after outlasting top seed Trudy Adeniyi-to, 6-5, 7-5, 7-5, in just over three hours.

Olivarez later fell in top seed Maricris Cuba, 6-1, 6-4, in the 14-under final, even as contender Mariam Jane Lapadaria took home the 12-under title with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Danielle Bedico.

The power-hitting Cordero also won the Head Point Begins leg and the Palaro elementary single gold medal in Naga City last year.

The fresh 7 student at Colegio San Agustin, however, admitted to getting physically drained in the second set while he yielded to Lazaro.

"I got tired in the second set and Leander took advantage of it," said Cordero. "But I was able to regain my form quickly in the third set and was in complete control of the match."

John Ronnie Largo, Kim Ivan Gerona, Jareh Lagunzad and Vince Mark Bobadilla also topped their respective categories in this tourney held in honor of former Lang-tams Philippine Tennis Association president Salvador Andaluia.

The unseeded Largo relied the best 16-under title after a 6-2, 6-3 decision over fourth seed Alain Jay, while the third-seeded Gerona whipped No. 8 Jose Lorenzo Ramos, 6-3, 6-2, for the boys' 14-under crown.

Boys' 12-under top seed Lagunzad, a Grade 5 student at the St. Benedict Childhood Education Center, turned his 5 Jasmine Ramos, 6-4, 6-0, for his fifth straight title, while the third-seeded Bobadilla took the nature 10-under championship over second-seed Jessa Olivarez 6-3.

So draws Viet GM as Torre takes 1st loss

Standings after Rounds:

4.5 (3)—GM Le Quang Liem (VIE); 4.0—GM Wesley So (PHI); 3.5—GM Rahul Sharma (IND), IM Ahmed Layla (IRQ), IM Omar Salama (EGY), Mesfun Samuel (ERI), Mesfun Henkal (IRI); GM Yu Yangyi (CHN), IM Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son (VIE), IM Do Van (VIE), 3.0—GM Eugene Torre (PHI), IM Nguyen Anh Tuan (VIE), IM Joseph Clarence Catalbas (PHI), GM Nguyen Anh Dung (VIE), GM Bui Thai Ha (VIE), Pedja Blagojevic (SRB), IM Ahyar Ana Nur (MAS), IM Subhanan Gopinath (IND), Santosa Hartarkan (INDN).

VIETNAM FIELDING INTERNATIONAL MASTER Quang Liem Wesley So awaited for a draw while Vietnamese Grandmaster Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son in the fifth round yesterday in stay on course in the 2007 Asian Zonal Chess Championships in Phu Quoc in Vietnam's Kien Giang province.

The seven for the 13-year-old who led three Torre nine after his instinct GM Eugene Torre absorbed a stinging defeat at the hands of world-ranked Vietnamese GM Le Quang Liem, who now leads the tournament with 4.5 points.

So is in solo second with 4.0 points in the tournament that will select the nation's three representatives to the world chess championships.

He now faces IM Mq Vinh of Vietnam today. He downed compatriot Pan Master Truong The Anh in the fifth round.

IM Oliver Dimakiling outplayed Vietnamese IM Nguyen Anh Tuan in the first of his big bunch of 3.5 pointers that includes Viet, GM Nelson Mariano, Truong Son, and To Hoang Truong, GM Darwin Laylo and National Master Oliver Barbosa and Noah Kantiel.

Mariano drew his fifth match with Pi, and so did Laylo with Kantiel and Barbosa with GM Rogelio Antonio Jr.

Antonio, fresh off his victory in the Metro City International Open in Michigan last month, and Torre headed the nine-man fourth tier 11th place with 3.0 points.

In women's play, WFM Catherine Perena held overnight solo leader WFM Ce Thanh Thuy of Vietnam to a draw.

Perena now has 3.5 points, to a tie for third to ninth places with FIDE Bong Thi Bao Tram and WFM Le Kieu Thanh Man of Vietnam and WGM Mongolian Bolbuug of Mongolia.

Le remained on top with 4.5 points, half point ahead of countrywoman WFM Pham Le Thao Nguyen.

While Beverly Mendoza and Jayson Jay Lumbao drew their match while WFM Kimberly Jane Collantes yielded to WFM Thai Thi Kim Liquid of Vietnam.

WFM Cherie Lamel Bernabe took a bye yesterday. Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

WEEKLY So stays half a point behind pacemaking Viet GM. NOEL ORTEGA

Ex-PBA cager Babilonia passes away

By Marang Carcillo

BABILONIA | AP

VISCOLO "GEBO" Babilonia, pulled by Pembroke fourth overall in the 1990 PBA Draft, died yesterday due to pneumonia. He was 40.

A native of Antipolo City who saw action for PBA teams Alaska, San Miguel, Sta. Lucia, Shell, 7-Eleven and Pepsi after a one-year stint with Pembroke, Babilonia left behind wife Marissa Chavez and sons Thomas Mark, Gabriel Ian and Seth Justin.

Babilonia was a product of Letran in the NCAA, where he was the junior MVP (senior) despite Paul Reyes, and LIST in the DAAP.

Babilonia's career flourished in Letran and he became a key colleague recruit for Sonny Trinidad. Though he never won a title in college, Babilonia was able to play in several national teams.

In his last PBA active season, a league of 23.2 minutes, 8.7 points, and 4.1 rebounds in a 116-pros career that was put on hold in 1996 because of heart problems. He returned to the PBA in 1999 through the Sunkist Orange.

Babilonia's remains are at the funeral Memorial Chapel along Marcos Highway in Antipolo. Interment will be announced. With reports from Jeannine M. Ryan

Let's stop hugging the pig

BARE EYE

Barak Trinidad

IT WASN'T CHANGE THE WORLD. BUT this is one moment that could help some less hypersensitive beings in our quick-paced, overly-regulated society, methinks.

"I need a silver any body to become the conservancy of dead animals."

No, coming from a serious survivor, it definitely would not help plug.

Not the worst that had helped Michael Jordan by.

It's an offering, a tip for those in search of inner peace and better health through a less lavish lifestyle.

Try and go meatless for less of a meal.

That sensible suggestion was from actress Chin Chin Gutierrez, as quoted by ebullient leader Mandy Charvet of Gin Kalad, Mandaluyong City.

Charvet swore he became an instant Gutierrez fan after hearing Chin Chin have her sweet soul recently.

Ms Gutierrez is an avowed vegetarian.

The love was apparently spoken in our television program where the actress was interviewed after having survived a live in their vegetarian.

She also suffered severe burns after she jumped back and tried to rescue her bedridden mother from the burning house.

Thin end, here's our urgent plug:

"Good Day Please come and enjoy a food raising show for Chin Chin Gutierrez on Jan. 16, 8 p.m. onward at Mark's. Eighteen artists have already committed to perform.

Bon Jovid, Sexy Vegga, Gaelic Sanchez, Chaney and Bidney of APO, Jay Capuzan, John Gosaco and many more. Tickets are only at 1K and 2K, for patron seats. Have a perfect Xmas. Pls. reserve now. Call 7231026 to 28. Thank you."

That's today. Mark's is located on the third level of Greenhills in Mandaluyong.

Charvet, swearing Gutierrez is a pure embodiment of class and composure, has promised to attend.

Listen, please.

This column was being rushed a day ahead of its original Sunday deadline.

But as soon as your reporter here had completed typing that announcement, my cellphone beeped.

"Heard from the radio. Chin Chin's mother hacked, galing na raw. Just now," informed family Charvet who was on his way home from office Saturday.

You see, when Richard Merk sent that initial request last week to announce the concert, he told: "Please help us here. Because of this, her house burned down and her mother is confined at the ICU. She saved her mother actually. Thank you, Ea."

Naturally, my next move upon hearing the tragic news was to zero back my drive and Richard Merk to ask if the fund-raiser would proceed as scheduled.

"Sure...definitely," he said. "The more the needs is now."

Richard replied to assure Chin Chin would be able to come to the concert.

The more she needs to now, so this to protect him controlled an appointment in order to be there.

In the end, Chin Chin may not have total by surrendered in returning her dear mother.

But that puts love and between she had declared Christmas with her the top of table.

Ea, we would invite San Juggon Estrada in come to the concert.

We would also ask friends in the media who are closer to Manny Pangilinan to request the requested tycoon to please show up.

You're wondering why we have singled out these two personages?

It's all for the simple reason that they are both involved in a given bid to rescue Philippine basketball.

As we help and assure Chin Chin Gutierrez, it's also our duty in pray for the success of this selfless mission to rescue basketball from a misguided group that has remained the greatest obstacle to the game's renewal in the Philippines.

There are also countless victims of crimes and calamities in the country.

Stop hugging the pig. Let's all do our share.

SPORTSWATCH

Yulo Memorial tilt slated at Canlubi

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—ANOTHER BANNER RACE IS EXPECTED TO GET action at the Jose Yulo Memorial Tournament. Canlubang golf's annual two-day open competition that will tee off on Jan. 27. More than 300 duffers are expected to participate in the event. Proceeds from the tournament will be donated to a scholarship fund for the Canlubang Country Club caddies. Players will be competing for a special straight prize championship. Palladio Alcantara is defending his 2006 title. Alcantara finished with 141 points, one point ahead of Ricardo Ramos and Jose Mendoza. Complete details on the tournament may be obtained from Ramon Cruz at telephone numbers 549-4140 and 549-4141 or 0920-9411040. The North and South courses will be used.

More Coach E classes open this week

MORE COACHES OPEN THIS WEEK ON THE COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL with coaching sessions and classes scheduled for Monday and Wednesday at Greenhills Gymnasium. Coach E is a basketball training program for coaches, international basketball Academy (IBA) president Gary Alejano said the school has also developed coaches who have become part of the Coach E basketball family. Among those coaches who will be joining the school this week are Jeff Cariaso, Jimmy Mariano, Jeff Cariaso, Jimmy Mariano, Jeff Cariaso, Jimmy Mariano,

Real coach axes David

MADRID, SPAIN—DAVID BECKHAM WON'T play again for Real Madrid after announcing his departure at the end of the season for the Los Angeles Galaxy of the MLS, coach Fabio Capello said Saturday.

"He is not going to play any more. He will practice, but, he is not going to play," Capello said at a news conference.

Capello listed a difficult decision due to the size and importance of Beckham's deal with the Galaxy.

"He is a great professional, but he already has a very important contract with another club," Capello said, explaining the decision to allow Beckham to train with Madrid but not play.

BECKHAM

Beckham's spokesman Simon Oliveira said the 31-year-old midfielder would "continue to give his full commitment and professionalism on the club."

"David is not joined at the sports hip from Fabio Capello as he is body from the club has informed him of their intention," Oliveira said in a statement. "As far as David is aware, he has a contract for the remainder of the season and he remains dedicated to the club and its supporters."

Beckham announced Thursday that he will not extend his contract with Madrid when it expires in June and is instead leaving for Galaxy on a five-year deal that will reportedly be worth a total of US$250 million including endorsements.

Madrid would not want to contemplate the consequences of a major injury to Beckham while he is still with the club. At the same time, fans at the Bernabeu are unlikely to be happy without a chance in hid one of their "Galacticos" goodbyes.

Capello holds unlikely to reverse the decision for Beckham not to play again. Capello said he'd not spoken with Beckham since the latter announced his new deal. AP

AUGUST Jason Kapono (left) of the Washington's Gilbert Arenas, San Antonio's Antonio Mario Gerald Jackson in his previous hit offensively.

Wade turns up heat for Miami

Garnett achieves milestone

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH—DWYANE WADE HAS THE MIAMI Heat looking more like the reigning National Basketball Association champions.

Wade scored 31 points and Jason Williams added 20 as the Heat won their fourth straight game Saturday, downing the Utah Jazz, 119-113.

The Heat had suffered through a five-game losing streak as Wade nursed a sore right ankle.

While the Heat are still without injured superstar center Shaquille O'Neal, and coach Pat Riley has taken an indefinite leave of absence to address his own health concerns, Wade's return has provided a tremendous boost.

On Saturday, Wade made 9-of-22 shots and made 12-of-13 free throws; he also had 10 assists and a season-high six steals.

In the second quarter, Wade converted a three-point play and Williams drained a 3-pointer with 1:28 left in the first half a 61-44 lead. Miami scored 39 points in the period.

The Heat lead by as many as 22 points in the third quarter before the Jazz made some charge.

Utah pulled within 97-90 on Carlos Boozer's 18-foot jumper with 9:37 remaining. But Miami answered with an impressive 13-0 surge highlighted by Ivan Ivanovic's 3-point for Jason Kapono.

In Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett scored 32 points and surpassed 10,000 rebounds for his career as the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the New Jersey Nets, 109-98, Saturday by more than six points for the first time this season.

Garnett pulled down 14 rebounds to become the 32nd player in league history to reach the 10,000 mark. Mark Blount added 15 points and seven rebounds for the Timberwolves, who used a 12-1 run midway through the fourth quarter to outside the winds more to 12 games.

For the first time this season, the Wolves won a game by more than six points and improved to 6-1 in 2007.

In Chicago, Ben Gordon made the most of a rare opportunity in the Bulls' starting lineup on Saturday, scoring 26 points to lead five players in double figures for the Bulls in a 111-96 clubbing of Memphis.

Kirk Hinrich had 20 points and eight assists and Luol Deng scored 16 points for the Bulls, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

Chicago made it look easy, despite the absence of Ben Wallace and Andres Nocioni. Wallace sat out with a sore back and Nocioni was serving a one-game suspension for elbowing New Jersey's Jason Kidd Monday.

Gordon started the first six games of the season before bringing his scoring prowess off the bench. He is averaging 20.2 points as a reserve.

In San Antonio, Gilbert Arenas, and last in late December and the first week of the new year has gone wild, taking with his Washington Wizards.

Arenas shot poorly for the fourth straight game Saturday as the Wizards fell, 93-88, to San Antonio Spurs, who posted their fourth straight victory.

Second to the league in scoring at 30 points per game, Arenas is in a slump similar to the one he went through earlier this season and dragging the Wizards down with him.

The All-Star guard has made just 25-of-74 shots in his last four games, three of which the Wizards have lost.

Against the Spurs, Arenas made just 6-of-20 shots and scored 17 points, his lowest total since managing 9 for a free at Chicago on December 2.

He never got untracked as he was hounded by Manu Ginobili and Bruce Bowen, a pair of very good defenders. AP/AP

COMPLETE RESULTS: [names in] Memphis 81, Detroit 91, Boston 73, San Antonio 82, Washington 88, Houston 108, New Jersey 80, Chicago 111, Memphis 96, Miami 119, Utah 113, Phoenix 103, Orlando 101, Houston 114, Sacramento 111, Cleveland 104, LA Clippers 92

FEDERER: Numbers don't lie

Signs point to Federer-Nadal finale

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—ROGER, MEET, the rest.

Roger Federer is on the cusp of a record for most consecutive weeks atop the men's tennis rankings, regardless of what he does at the Australian Open.

Rafael Nadal owns the record for most weeks at No. 2.

With seven of the last eight Grand Slam titles between them, it's hardly surprising they're heavily favored to meet in the Australian Open final on Jan. 28.

"If I didn't play as well, he would have been No. 1 a long time ago," Federer said in a small tribute to Nadal on the eve of the year's first Grand Slam. "He's my No. 1 competitor. The numbers don't lie."

Nadal missed the last Australian Open because of injuries and had a years last week in Sydney withdrawing from a semi-up trauma. more with a groin strain, finishing in Sydney was just a precaution, he said.

"I feel 100 percent now—that's the most important thing."

Even though he has a winning record against Federer, losing him in four finals last year, Nadal shares one thing in common with the chasing pack: he's almost out of words trying to describe Federer's success.

"He our he's one of the best in history, for sure," he said.

Federer made the final at all four majors last season, sweeping three of them. Nadal's title defense at the French Open broke Federer's bid for a season Grand Slam, something no player has achieved since Rod Laver in 1969.

With 12 titles and a 52-5 season—Federer is as far ahead in the rankings that he is guaranteed of breaking Pete Sampras' world record of 1365 weeks at No. 1 by the end of next month.

He's held the top ranking since the week after winning the 2004 Australian Open, the second of his nine major titles.

So when does that leave Nadal? He has occupied the No. 2 position for 70 weeks, a record for second spot according to the ATP. AP

SONY OPEN

Howell leads; Fujikawa marches on

HONOLULU—CHARLIE HOWELL III has another chance to win the Sony Open, and he has never felt more prepared.

Howell downed his offseason to putting and it continued to pay off Saturday when he birdied the last two holes for a 5-under 65, giving him a one-shot lead over Luke Donald going into the final round.

Still in the mix with the biggest stake as Winner was 16-year-old Tadd Fujikawa, the pint-sized sophomore from Honolulu who delivered more surprises and allowed everyone to dream big. A day after becoming the youngest player in 36 years to make the cut on the PGA Tour, he shot another 68 and was tied for eighth, six shots behind.

"I don't have anything to lose right now," Fujikawa said.

Big things were expected of Howell when he won rookie of the year in 2000 and captured the Mitsubishi Championship a year later. But the victories dried up, and a technically sound game has been held back by putting.

He took only 25 putts in the third round, tying second in the tournament in putting and even at 12-under 197.

Donald had a chance to join him with a long eagle putt on the last hole, but it stayed left of the cup. He shot a 69 and will be paired with Howell in the final group Sunday.

Neil Gordon was in control until raining a 6-foot birdie putt on the 12th that would have given him a two-shot lead. He took consecutive bogeys down the stretch and wound up with a 70 to finish at 11-under 199.

Steve Stricker might have been the only player at Waialae not surprised by Fujikawa. They played together two practice rounds on Monday, and at the three-time PGA Tour winner kept nothing down scores, he noticed he was getting beat. He bird shot 66 and beat him by four. AP

SC acquits Campomanes

THE SUPREME COURT HAS AC- quitted former International Chess Federation president Florencio Campomanes, reversing the decision by the Sandiganbayan to convict him of failure to make an accounting of funds used to stage the 30th World Chess Olympiad in 1992.

In an 18-page decision dated Dec. 19, the SC Third Division cleared Campomanes after the prosecution failed to cite the correct law that would have upheld the Sandiganbayan's ruling.

The decision penned by Associate Justice Antonio Eduardo Nachura, the Ombudsman, through its Special Prosecutor, had failed to prove that Campomanes was required to account to the Commission on Audit at least P1.25 million he had received from the government.

In effect, the SC reversed the Sandiganbayan's decision, saying there was no legal basis to compel Campomanes to render an accounting to the COA.

Furthermore, the high tribunal pointed out that Campomanes is not a public officer and therefore not required to submit such accounting.

The anti-graft court has overturned

CAMPOMANES

Campomanes for violating Article 218 in relation to Article 222 of the Revised Penal Code and was imposed the penalty of a P6,000 fine.

However, the Supreme Court rejected the contention that the COA has the authority to demand an accounting from Campomanes.

"It took 10 years but I hope my name and sense of honor I just could not see being penalized for bringing to our country the best organized World Chess Olympiad ever," said Campomanes.

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SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

LOT NO.	Item Description	Approved Budget for the Contract	Date of Bid Opening	Date of Publication	Date of Publication
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
3	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
5	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pre-bid criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. Bidding is open to all interested bidders, whether local or foreign, subject to the conditions for eligibility specified in the IRR. Interested bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below during office hours. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be acquired by interested bidders upon payment of a non-refundable fee for the Bidding Documents in the amount specified above. The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award in accordance with Section 41 of RA 9184 and its IRR, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

For more information, please refer to:
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Business

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Gov't budget deficit at a low P62B in '06

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **Rice producers seen** to yield little in '07 /B6

■ **Experts see good year** ahead despite risks /B10

BIR, Customs collection targets for 2007 lowered

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT LIKELY ENDED 2006 WITH A BUDGET deficit of about P62 billion, way below the programmed ceiling of P125 billion.

The emerging 2006 fiscal deficit was contained in a full-year fiscal performance assessment presented during the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee on Friday. The final figure will be officially announced on Feb. 14.

The government was able to keep to budget deficit in check last year largely due to underspending, especially with Congress' failure to enact the 2006 national budget.

The government operated under the budget of 2005, which was about P100 billion less than intended. The Congress approved in October a supplemental budget of P46.9 billion, but officials said it came too late for line agencies to spend on their programs for 2006.

GOVT B2

ABS-CBN eyes IPO for subsidiary

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION ABS-CBN Global is looking at a possible public listing in either Hong Kong or Singapore, Asia's major financial hubs, by next year, investment sources said.

ABS-CBN Global's subscriber base grew 20 percent year-on-year in the third quarter, translating to 1.4 million viewers worldwide by end-September.

The sources said the group of television giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. was now studying an option to list in ABS-CBNcorp runs ABS-CBN Global as part of a study to extend ABS-CBN's current businesses. ABS-CBNcorp' is a video and audio-streaming subscription service on the Internet that provides Filipinos worldwide with access to news and entertainment shows from ABS-CBN.

ABS-CBN earlier said it planned to take public ABS-CBN Global by 2008 through the Stock Exchange of Singapore, company chief Eugenio Lopez III said last year.

ABS-CBN Global, which accounted for 7% percent of the company's revenues in the third quarter, derives the bulk of its revenues from subscription sales of its cable and direct-to-home services.

ABS-CBN's net income for the first nine months of the year surged 79 percent to 6five million from P689 million a year ago, reflecting the continuous improvement in its core business. Despite an industry-wide slowdown in advertising spending, airtime revenues grew unprecedented at P8 billion in the first nine months last year. Revenues were also boosted by license fees from the migration of DTH (direct-to-home) subscribers in South America to DirecTV's platform.

Expense growth, on the other hand, remained controlled as the company kept a tight rein on its operating expenses.

Stocks seen to ease

STOCK PRICES MAY EASE AFTER THE SHARP gains in the past weeks but traders and fund managers remain optimistic that overall sentiment remains bullish in the long term.

"We may see some consolidation or blue chips this week," said Joseph Ronan, president of Lagda Equities Inc.

All Capital Securities said in a weekly note to clients that in the absence of any strong negative catalyst, the market continued to stay on its upward trend.

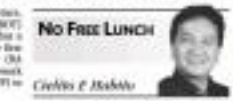
"However, the market should continue to encounter some challenges in convincingly breaking out of the 3,300 resistance level. Volatility was relatively high last week, so there is a good possibility that volatility will decrease and prices will consolidate in the near term. The main market trading range will be between 3,000 and 3,300. Market fundamentals remain very positive as shown by the steady decline in interest rates and the strength of the peso," All Capital Securities said.

The brokerage added that the lowering policy interest rates ahead of the May elections might keep investors at bay but positive catalysts continued to influence market sentiment.

STOCKS B4

Moving backward on the BOT Law

THOSE OF US WHO ARE ABLE TO TRAVEL around the region know how shamefully behind we are relative to our neighbors in infrastructure. With government resources simply too limited to provide for our tremendous infrastructure backlog, the Philippines became a pioneer in tapping private sector funds to provide public infrastructure, through the build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme and its many variants. It was thus a matter of necessity that we became the first country to come up with a BOT law (RA 6957) in 1990 to provide the legal framework for such private sector participation (PSP) in public infrastructure.



No Free Lunch

Cielito F. Habito

Questionable revisions

We have since learned many valuable lessons—including some rather costly ones—from our PSP experience. Our BOT rules have undergone several changes in recent years. In years' worth of such lessons, through amendments to the original BOT law itself (via RA 7718) and to its implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). In 2004, another round of comprehensive amendments to the IRR was initiated by the BOT Center. But last year, just as the new amended IRR was about to be issued after two years of careful and extensive consultations and deliberations, the Palace decided to keep it from seeing the light of day. Instead, it has put forward its own separate revisions (but appear to be motivated by a faulty appreciation of these valuable lessons, at least, in its inherent tardiness, in some cases) with the professionals in government tasked with ensuring the integrity of the PSP process put separately uncomfortable—to put it mildly—with the Palace-sponsored amendments. While very few are aware of the issue, it is actually a matter of great concern to the general public that deserves wide deliberation.

Cutting out ICC

The Palace-sponsored amendments, in essence, eliminate the role of the inter-agency Investment Coordination Committee (ICC) chaired by the Department of Finance and technically supported by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) in evaluating and approving major BOT and other PSP projects. Instead, it is entirely left to the implementing government department, agencies and local government units (LGUs) to evaluate and approve their proposed BOT/PSP projects. The ICC would be limited to approving only the list of BOT projects submitted by the agencies and LGUs, and setting the required rate of return for unsolicited BOT projects.

The rationale is purportedly to expedite the approval process by cutting the red tape in pursuing privately funded infrastructure projects. At face value, this looks good, and would certainly be welcomed particularly by the private sector proponents of such projects. The problem is, our colorful 16-years of experience with PSP (including infamous examples like Ninoy-3 and Lanzacon) tell us that the Palace amendment may be like letting the proverbial fox guard the hen. By devolving evaluation and approval of BOT/PSP projects to the proponent agencies and LGUs themselves, we would indeed weaken the time required for such approvals—but at what cost?

Dangerous devolution

The law mandates (through the Administrative Code and the Sinks Charter) that all major capital projects proposed by the government should be reviewed by the ICC, for very critical reasons. This rigorous review considers the legal, financial, technical, fiscal, economic and development policy implications of such projects. ICC is also the forum for ensuring proper coordination in the planning and implementation of various infrastructure projects of various agencies. When JBIC and DOTC both planned on going down the ground with their respective Clark/LRT-2 projects at the same time, for example, it was the ICC where the duplication was avoided. It is in the ICC where the macroeconomic implications, including the fiscal, monetary and foreign exchange impacts of major projects are considered, a perspective that individual departments and LGUs do not have. But even at the narrow project level, agencies and LGUs are generally ill-equipped to undertake proper project appraisal.

This move to reduce ICC's function in PSP projects to being a mere clearinghouse, apart from reducing the two agencies's ability to avoid risks that the credit rating agencies, the donor community and users and investors of infrastructure in the government have begun to express strong concern about. Indeed, it is a matter that should be of great concern to the general public as a whole.

Vested interests?

Time and again, Neda and the ICC have been unfairly seen as an "unnecessary hurdle" in getting government projects done. It just never may be me, when I headed Neda during the Ramos years, to convince colleagues in government and the President himself, that the ICC is there precisely to avoid a very important purpose—and that was, to put a temper in check, to protect them from congressional (the infamous committee investigations and even inroads that could cause even long-after hearing government

One cannot help wonder if those amendments to short-circuit the BOT approval process are being pushed by parties with vested interests, personally or politically, who are expediting certain PSP deals and avoiding the often difficult but legitimate questions raised by the ICC. Sens. J. Cayetano, and many other past presidential BOTs clearly tell us we must re-tighten the rules, not loosen them. Eliminating from the process the role of a body assembled to uphold the public interest raises questions very critical to the future of this country indeed.

Comments are welcome at chabito@inter.net.ph

Gov't ...

From page B1

The government's annual budget deficit from January to November stood at only P68.33 billion, 32 percent below the ceiling of P122 billion set under the fiscal program for the period.

During this same meeting on Friday, the BBCC also agreed to slash the 2007 revenue targets of the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs to factor in lower interest rates and a stronger peso exchange rate against the US dollar.

BBCC documents showed that the BIR's target collection was trimmed by P16.14 billion to P785 billion from P799 billion.

Lower interest rates, while beneficial to corporate profits, also result in lower bond yields and thus translates to lower collection of withholding taxes on government securities by the BIR.

For 2007, the BBCC forecasts interest rates based on the benchmark 91-day treasury bills to fall to 4-4.5 percent, lower than the 5.3- to 6.5-percent projection during the previous review of economic assumptions last November.

BBCC documents explained that "the lower interest rate forecast was in view of the 'decelerating inflation, ample liquidity in the system and the sustained improvements in the national government's fiscal position and the strong demand for government securities."

"Strong foreign exchange inflows will continue to drive the appreciation in the peso by validity. Inflows are expected to come from overseas Filipino workers' remittances as well as from foreign investments as a result of fiscal reforms and improving economic fundamentals," it explained.

The BBCC also agreed to trim the BOC's collection target for this year by P7 billion to P628 billion from P635 billion because of the peso's continued strengthening.

A stronger peso results in a lower peso equivalent for the BOC's dollar earnings from import tariffs and duties.

The BBCC also approved a revision in its foreign exchange assumption in factor in the peso's surge to an even higher against the dollar. The assumption for this year was changed to average of P51.50 to $1 from the earlier forecast of P49.50.

But despite the lower collection target for the two major collection agencies, the total government revenue target for 2007 was maintained by the BBCC at P1.512 trillion and the budget deficit cap at P63 billion.

The government expects to generate P25 billion from the sale of its remaining stake in telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. by April.

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US investment bank sees boom in bank lending in RP this year

By Doris C. Dumlao

THERA OF "LAST BANKING" IN CHINA

US-based investment bank Morgan Stanley sees a boom in local credit activity for the first time the Asian currency crisis in 1997 as the Philippines enters a new credit cycle fueled by falling interest rates, a healthier banking sector and a more optimistic picture.

Over the next 12 months, local commercial bank lending could expand by 13-18 percent given the country's concentrated economic fundamentals and bank balance sheets, Morgan Stanley analysts Chetan Ahya and Deepti Rao said in a Jan. 3 commentary titled "Philippines becoming."

The beginning of a new credit cycle."

The report said a combination of structural changes implemented by the government and increased global appetite for emerging market assets had brought about a significant reduction in risk premium in the Philippines over the last three years.

"Following the sharp decline in government bond yields, banks' lending rates have also started to decline over the past three months, triggering the first credit cycle after nine years," it said.

Declining interest rates to create demand for loans

The restructuring of the banking sector's balance sheet, resulting in a decline in non-performing loans and a comfortable capital adequacy ratio, promises to kickstart a new credit cycle, Morgan Stanley said.

It said risk aversion toward loan assets caused by the large level of NPLs in the banking system and attractive yields on government bond yields in previous years resulted in some degree of "lazy" banking, referring to a focus on investing in risk-free government bonds instead of corporate or retail loans.

"However, with the further sharp decline in government bond yields over the last 12 months and a flattening government bond yield curve, banks are being forced to look at to lend asset growth," the report said.

"Banks are likely to see lending rates further. The magnitude of the rises is likely to be higher for consumer loans, where the spreads have been significantly higher," it projected.

Morgan Stanley said it did not come as a surprise that growth in local bank lending accelerated to an eight-year high of 11.2 percent as of end-October against an average of 4.6 percent and 1.2 percent in the third and second quarters of 2006.

"After nine years of sub-par credit growth, we believe the Philippines is about to see a major credit cycle driven by a sharp decline in the cost of capital," the report said.

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Bond bourse shows sharp rise in trading volume

Daily average rose to ₱5.6B in 4th quarter of 2006

By Dante L. Lucas

TRADING VOLUME IN THE COUNTRY'S FIXED-income exchange rose sharply in 2006 as the system had its first full year of operations following a controversial start in the previous year.

Philippine Trading and Exchange Corp. (PHILTRAD) said trading volume for government securities last year reached P767.4 billion, up 80 percent from the previous year's P427.7 billion.

The 13,852 transactions among participating banks posted in 2006 were also up by 78 percent from only 7,766 transactions in 2005.

"The growth figures are quite significant, particularly if you take into account all the challenges we faced during the year," PDEx president and chief operating officer Oscar Ortel said in a statement.

The 2005 trading days arose from 169 trading days, as the firm started operations only on March 28, 2005. In 2006, however, the exchange had 243 trading days.

The exchange pointed out that even if it were to count only transactions that occurred from March 28, 2006 onward, the resulting volume and number of transactions would still reflect a 19- and 41-percent growth, respectively over 2005.

"The numbers provide us with a reference against which we can anchor both our efforts this year and, more importantly, our optimism for the future," Ortel added.

PDEx said the average daily volume increased by P924 million in 2006 over the previous year's levels.

On a quarterly basis, however, the actual increase was much more significant. From a P1.8 billion daily average in the fourth quarter of 2005, PDEx ended 2006 with a daily average trade volume of P5.5 billion in the fourth quarter.

"This is an impressive operating indicator that provides us with grounded optimism of the near future," Ortel added. "The bond exchange program of the Bureau of Treasury provided added impetus to increasing the daily volumes and that has to be duly recognized. Overall however, I do think we are making the circuit breakers."

In 2005, the five most traded fixed-rate treasury notes had remaining tenors of three years with the most traded being government bonds maturing in January 2009. For last year, the particular security was only the fifth most traded treasury note.

PDEx said the five most liquid treasury notes in 2006 had remaining tenors of four to nine years.

Stocks ...

from page B1

such as the latest drop in local treasury bill rates, which fell to historical lows at 3.795 percent.

Hints of a credit rating upgrade are looking more imminent on industries that the government may put more of its debts ahead of schedule, AB Capital also noted.

Standard & Poor's continues to be optimistic about the country's outlook this year especially if the sale of power assets proceed, the brokerage firm said. The credit rating agency noted in a report that the government was able to reduce its fiscal deficit from 2.1 percent of gross domestic product in 2005 to only 1.5 percent in 2006.

The peso's strength also continued to boost the government's coffers as every P1 appreciation against the dollar reduces its debt by P5 billion, AB Capital further noted.

"This effectively allows the potential savings to be channeled to more government infrastructure programs or for further cushion in debt; in 2006, the government effectively prepaid some of its obligations by buying back $575 million worth of Brady bonds and paying a $70-million loan with the Asian Development Bank," the brokerage firm said.

Meanwhile, SEO Trust head of strategy Pilipinas8 Arias said the market would watch the US market and emerging market developments specially with the release of US economic data.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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Tumanggap ng pinakamataas na pandaigdigang parangal sa taong 2006 ang Lalawigan ng Batangas bilang pagkilala sa maayos na pamamahala ng mga sinasakupang dalampasigan nito. Ang parangal ay iginawad ng Partnership in Environmental Management (PEMSEA), sa pagtangkilik ng United Nations Development Programme, kasabay ng pagdaraos ng pandaigdigang kumperensiya ng organisasyon sa Hainan,Tsina noong ika-13 ng Disyembre 2006. Ang pagkilala sa Batangas ay sinaksihan ng mahigit 700 kalahok na kumakatawan sa iba't-ibang pamahalaan, ahensiya ng United Nations, NGO, industriya, at akademiya. Walang duda, ito ay pagkilala ng mundo sa galing at talino ng Batangenyo na nagpunyaging alagaan ang kaniyang dalampasigan.

Galing at talino ng Batangenyo kinilala ng buong mundo

Kgg Arman C. Sanchez
Gobernador
Lalawigan ng Batangas

Dangal NG Batangas

PEMSEA
UNDP

Rice producers seen to yield little in '07

Pooled private funds for agri reform pushed

By Dianne L. Lucas

A NEW INVESTMENT SCHEME that will pool funds from real estate investors may be used to save the government's floundering agrarian reform program.

According to a report prepared by Cuervo Appraisers Inc., the introduction of real estate investment trusts (REITs) in the country is a viable alternative in the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) that will replace land use.

"The Agrarian REIT is a sensible alternative in the CARP Law," Cuervo Appraisers president Federico Cuervo said in his report. "Since almost 28 years of the CARP Law, the results can be seen. CARP has served well as a social tool. It, however, failed miserably as an economic tool and will continue to be a convenient political tool for the populist vote."

A REIT is a tradable company and security that owns and leases out income-producing real estate such as apartments, offices, warehouses, hotels and shopping centers. It is structured in a way that allows small investors to make equity investment in large scale income properties.

Under the proposed scheme, the Agrarian REIT will be patterned after similar instruments allowed in Malaysia in circumvent Islamic bank lending restrictions.

According to Cuervo, a five-year transition period would be sufficient to restore value of an agricultural land. By allowing the sale of agricultural properties, there will be new opportunities for countryside investments, and capital flow needed for agricultural productivity will expand.

"A steady high-yielding cash flow should be an attractive option to the thousands of institutional and direct-equity investments," he said.

The government can then reserve the limited CARP fund to social services.

The property appraiser believes that the Agrarian REIT will make available funds to farmers, fishermen and migrant workers "to acquire a self-liquidating investment in a professionally managed agrarian-based property income stream."

Deadlock in Congress over national budget may take its toll on RP staple

By Christine A. Gaylican

RICE PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRY could fall by the wayside if Congress were to fail in passing the 2007 Budget needed by the Department of Agriculture and other line agencies of the government.

According to a ranking agriculture official, Philippine rice production in 2007 may only reach 16 million metric tons, or 3 percent higher than last year's yield, estimated at 15.3 million tons.

"We may not be able to see a higher production target but that does not mean a new budget," said Prisco Bilaletsan, the department's program director for rice.

The department's effort to boost production of rice—a major food staple in the country—is anchored largely on budgetary support from the government, Bilaletsan said.

The deadlock in Congress over the proposed 2007 national budget of P1.02 trillion has forced the agriculture department to consider operating on a truncated budget of P1.5 billion, an opinion the DOF claims is unfair for 2007.

Bilaletsan said that this would affect the department's five-year program, beginning in 2006, to rehabilitate irrigation facilities covering 100,000 hectares of rice lands.

The program, which entails a budgetary requirement of P22 billion, is expected to help the country meet its goal of self-sufficiency in rice production by 2008.

Under the program, some of the farmlands will be devoted to high-yielding hybrid rice varieties. While Bilaletsan explained that, in retaining self-sufficiency in producing rice, the country will no longer have to rely on imports, which is meant to reduce the P29 billion a year.

"Farmers in these areas would have two cropping seasons, and the additional output from these areas should be enough to cover our rice domestic requirements," he said.

A rapidly increasing Philippine population has also picked up demand for the main staple at an average of 32,000 metric tons of rice a day.

The Philippines is a major rice importer in Asia. Last year, it bought 1.65 million tons, mostly from Vietnam.

The National Food Authority, the country's state-owned grains trading firm, is set to bring in this year some 1.72 million tons of rice to stabilize the country's supply requirements.

Coco product's price abroad up over storm concerns

By Rosvil W. Domingo and Christine A. Gaylican

SOME 195,000 COCONUT TREES LOST about P7.14-1 million in damaged coconut trees due to Typhoon Milenyo that ravaged southern Luzon in late November 2006, according to the Philippine Coconut Authority.

PCA data shows that some 42.86 million coconut trees were damaged, most of which were in the Bicol region. Another 86 by the super typhoon.

Also, exports of Philippine coconut oil last year fell by 6 percent to 1.07 million metric tons compared to the 1.14 million metric tons delivered in 2005.

"The reduction in exports was due to post storm damage," according to the United Coconut Associations of the Philippines.

Coconut plantations have been severely damaged by strong typhoons that pummeled the country during the last three months of 2006.

On the upside, UCAP said prices of desiccated coconut exports have manufacturers said coconut farmers the effects of the typhoon on coconut output.

The PCA reported it has 10.8 million, or 79.1 percent, of the affected trees were those in the Bicol region. This represents about a tenth of the country's 100 million coconut bearing trees.

The agency said P300 million was needed for replanting and rehabilitation of affected coconut farms.

As a result, Ursp said an increase in the price of desiccated coconut exports from the Philippines was observed following the aftermath of Typhoon Milenyo in September and Typhoon Reming in October.

Desiccated or dehydrated coconut is used mainly in making cakes, desserts and other confections.

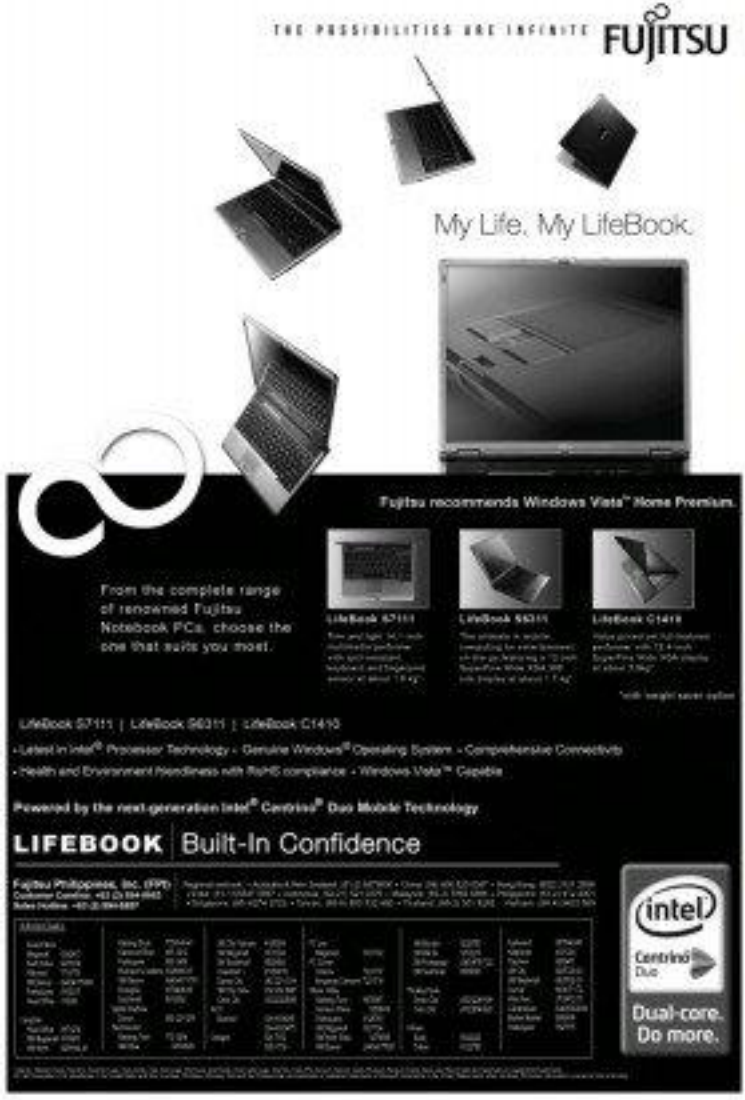
According to Ursp, the European buyers quoted confirmed rates of cargo and freight for fine and medium grades of fair average quality at $1,120 a metric ton in November, citing 15 percent from the $1,000 per MT quoted the week before.

In the same period, European buyers favored Philippine supplies, as cargo and freight costs of from Indonesian shipments rose only 9 percent to $1,090 per MT, while those from Sri Lanka increased by a percent to $1,018 per MT.

Latest Ursp data show that exporters shipped out 9,140 MT of desiccated coconut in November, or an increase of 2.7 percent from 8,916 MT.

Further, the umbrella group said traders in Europe believed prices of dehydrated coconut would remain firm even until the latter part of 2007.

"Both coconut supplies and rising demand from coconut oil millers (in coconut producing countries), could growing demand for dessicated coconut worldwide were cited as major factors fueling market dynamics," it added.



NTC mulls free interconnection between carriers

By Rica T. Dichoso

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) wants to impose free interconnection between carriers operating in the same province or local calling area and is calling for a public hearing to solicit comment on the matter.

Under the NTC's draft rules, a local calling area is "the province within which telecommunications services are furnished subscribers under specific scheduled rates and without toll charges."

The NTC said it made the draft rules in response to calls from several local exchange carriers (LECs) for intervention in interconnection disputes.

The commission said that, while local exchange networks are capital intensive, the costs per subscriber decreases as the number of users increase.

Subscribers of one LEC should be able to call customer using another LEC in the same area, and vice versa, said the NTC.

"If the interconnection then requires the installation of radio facilities, each interconnecting LEC shall provide the required space and interconnection free of charge," the NTC said in its draft rules. "Each interconnecting LEC shall allow (some), with at least 24-hour notice, at least one visit from the other LECs for the sole purpose of repair and maintenance of radio facilities."

Should the NTC's proposed interconnection push through, LECs that have not interconnected within one local calling area will be ordered to do so within 180 days from the effectivity of the final interconnection rules.

LECs may use the final circular as a basis for interconnection and may still negotiate better terms within 90 ninety days from the start of talks. After 90 days, the negotiating parties will have to adopt the terms stated in the circular.

SM Investments issuing $200M in 5-year bonds

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. SAID IT WOULD issue P200 million worth of five-year corporate debt bonds to refinance a portion of P300-million loan in managing debts this year.

Portion of the amount to be raised will be used as working capital of the company.

Refinancing entails replacing maturing debts with new debt at lower interest rates.

SMIC said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that it had secured board approval for the P200 million corporate issuance. The issue date has yet to be disclosed.

Joint lead managers Citigroup and Macquarie Securities (Asia) Limited as joint lead managers for the issue.

It said the details of the terms and conditions of the convertible bonds will be discussed and finalized with the underwriters.

SMIC said it was issuing the bonds at a time when its shares were trading at their all-time highs. It closed at P317.50 on Friday.

The company has consolidated the assets and operations of SM Supermarkets and SM Hypermarkets, effectively doubling the revenue and income base of SM retail group.

At the close of 2006 the stockholders of Banco De Oro Universal Bank and Equitable PCI Bank approved the merger of the two banks. The merged entity will result in greater efficiencies due to economies of scale and wider market reach, SMIC said.

'07 trade gap seen declining to $8.4B

PALAWAN MINING OPERATIONS
Chlorichel Mines and Development Corp. president Carolino L. Tanchay pays a courtesy call on Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes following the issuance of the firm's permit to mine nickel-cobalt outflow in the municipalities of Narra and Espanola in southern Palawan.

Export growth goal raised to 16%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY IS EXPECTED TO POST A current account surplus of $4.9 billion in 2006 and $5.4 billion this year, with an improved export performance seen trimming the trade shortfall.

The latest forecasts made by the interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee showed that the trade deficit, as indicated in the country's balance of payments report, would narrow down to $8.4 billion this year from the projected $10.7 billion for 2006.

The current account, a component of the BOP records the trade in goods and services and such transfers. The BOP measures the total foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

The latest DBCC forecasts were an improvement from the outlook in November. The previous projections showed the 2006 current account surplus being only $3.6 billion, with the 2007 level seen going down to $3.1 billion.

For 2006, the DBCC jacked up its export growth forecast to 16 percent from the target of 12 percent set in November to reflect the sustained export growth in the first 10 months of the year, as recorded by the National Statistics Office.

"Even assuming a slowdown in exports in November and December, the resulting expansion in exports for the year would be about 16 percent," the DBCC report said.

"Major contributors to the additional export proceeds would be garments, mineral products – particularly copper metal and concentrates – and petroleum products," the report explained.

Given a higher base in 2006, the export growth forecast for 2007 was trimmed to 11 percent from 13 percent.

The DBCC noted that import growth in 2006 was within the 12 percent growth forecast. With the scaling down of the export forecast for 2006, which will translate to lower raw material purchases, and the softening of crude prices, the import growth target was also reduced to 11 percent from 14 percent.

Overseas Filipino workers' remittances were another major component of the current account and a major factor behind the country's economic resilience.

Based on the latest assessment of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, OFW inflows could surge to a new high of $14.1 billion this year or 6 percent higher than the $13.4 billion seen to flow into the country in 2006.

Lack of infra support turns off investors

By Abigail L. Ho

THE LACK OF NECESSARY IN-frastructure such as roads and airports is discouraging potential investors from investing in new projects and tourists in the country, Philippine Travel Agencies Association president Ana Clemente Ili said.

"The problem is visa issuances don't want to invest due to lack of roads and airports," Clemente said. "Why spend so much to put up a hotel or a resort when tourists don't have any means to visit them?"

He said the Department of Tourism was already doing its part by guiding potential investors through the process of putting up business here—securing the necessary permits and giving perks from the Board of Investments.

"But this was not enough," he said, adding that the necessary infrastructure to bring tourists to various destinations have should be put in place.

Philippine Airlines chair Manuel Bagatsing added that the lack of infrastructure was also stunting the development of non-traditional tourist spots.

There are also places that have roads and other infrastructure support in place which have yet to be developed, he said.

"Subic's stimulating development in the northern and southern Luzon," he said. "The Philippines is basically a tourist destination, but development is mostly in the southern Philippines."

Other places that could still be further developed as world-class tourist spots are Bohol and Siargao, he said.

He said the passage of the pending Tourism Bill should aid in the development of these places, plus others that were recently on the radar of tourism.

This bill, he said, should give potential investors the impetus to invest in new hotels and resorts in popular tourist haunts, and even in "off-the-beaten-track" destinations.

"There are a lot of places that can be developed. The Tourism Bill will jumpstart tourism in other areas, the just Cebu, Boracay or Davao," he said.

He said the local tourism industry was currently in dire need of new rooms to accommodate all the tourists that were flocking to the country.

GOINGS-ON

RP's best managed firm

AutoCorp was named the Philippines' best managed large multidivision company in Investment's annual Best Managed Companies Poll.

The poll was participated by more than 1,000 investors and analysts covering local companies, regional firms, hedge fund companies and stock brokerage firms in the region.

Auditor was recognized for its leadership and for its real estate, banking, and telecommunications companies, as well as in electronics manufacturing, information technology, and water treatment service management and development.

Maruman licensee

Maruman Drydate Foods Corp. appointed Marina Beverages Co. Inc. as a licensee for the manufacturing, marketing, distribution and selling of Drydate ready to drink fruit juices. MBFC, for its part, will be responsible for packaging and fruit juice business.

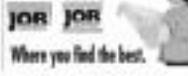
A deal was signed on 1 Nov by Alfredo M. Ramos, president, Edwin Mendoza, VP-sales and marketing; Raul Cuaja, VP-operations, and Albert R. Aurelio, VP-finance – the people in the Hannibal Gatorade Travel Quencher in the country.

Linking barangays

All 42,000 barangays nationwide will soon be connected through a text and internet network under the Isa Bangay Connectivity Program of Globe Telecommunications. Ugat ng mga Barangay Association and SMS Consultants.

Under the program, Smart will provide each barangay with four SIM cards for the use of the barangay captains and kagawads. The Barangay SIM cards will be loaded with a number of free text messages every month.

Smart will also provide Internet access to barangays through Smart Bro, the company's wireless broadband internet service.



St. Peter Chapels at SM: A milestone achievement as St. Peter Chapels opens its 10th chapel. The pioneer in establishing the largest memorial chapel network in the Philippines, they now acknowledge the presence of Legacy. Nearly an industry itself, St. Peter Chapels aims to expand its network to deliver affordable and superior quality memorial services to all Filipinos regardless of where they are in the Philippines. The official opening of St. Peter Life Plan Inc. (the holding firm more known as Legacy) in the Philippines' collaborative services thousands of families a month all over the Philippines — an association of reliability, experience and expertise.

Experts see good year ahead despite risks

Peso, elections top investor concerns

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

INVESTMENT HOUSE FIRST METRO Investment Corp. and the University of Asia and the Pacific expect a good year ahead for the economy but cautioned that risks remain.

In its study published in December, FMIC and the UAP said the country's favorable economic "fundamentals"—improving inflation rate, stronger foreign exchange, moderate gross domestic product growth and an "improvement" fiscal sector performance—would carry through in 2007, particularly in the first quarter.

Inflation, which measures the increase in the prices of goods and services, was expected to dip to below 4 percent this month and further down to 3 percent in February.

"Stable to softer oil prices should further support the downward trend in Philippine inflation rates, which had been pushed up in the last three years by spiraling crude oil prices and the additional 2 percent value-added tax," FMIC and UAP said.

FMIC and UAP, however, foresee that the peso may likely to return to 50 to a dollar by the second quarter this year as remittances from overseas Filipino workers have reached their peak.

"These inflows slow down starting January, and we expect the forward trade to worsen in early 2007," the study noted.

Gross domestic product, or the sum of goods and services produced in the country on the other hand, was expected to grow by 6 percent this year due to increased infrastructure spending and robust activity in the manufacturing sector.

Policies passes the biggest risk to these bullish growth numbers, the study said.

"If administration legislators do not get a sizeable majority, the President runs the risk of yet another impeachment effort," it said.

FMIC and UAP said the oil price shock should keep a cloud of uncertainty over the economy if the fiscal gains achieved by the government, at least until May 2007.

"The failure of Congress led by an ostensibly hostile to pass the 2007 budget before Christmas deprives them the point that policies may turn as otherwise promising outlook," the study noted.

Meantime, FMIC executive vice president Roberto Injio said a low interest rate scenario would also encourage the private sector to raise new capital through debt offers.

The capital market was also expected to remain vibrant this year as banks value more capital to comply with new financial requirements.

Fund raising at the capital market was seen to top P500 billion this year for both government and private sector borrowings and offerings, from P270 billion last year, Dispo said.

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BIR excise tax take down 10% as of Nov. '06

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE'S EXCISE tax collection as of November last year dropped 10 percent due to the lower tax rate from sales of alcoholic beverages and petroleum products.

The BIR collected P51.83 billion worth of excise tax in the 11 months to November last year, compared to the P57.86 billion recorded in the same period in 2005.

The excise tax collection as of November last year also fell short of the P62.9 billion target for the period.

Excise tax is levied on petroleum and so-called "sin" products, including alcohol and tobacco.

The tax is imposed to supposedly discourage excessive consumption of the covered products.

Data from the BIR showed that of the total excise tax collected in the first 11 months of last year, those collected from alcohol manufacturers reached only P34.86 billion, a drop of 16.8 percent from the previous year's P 41.92 billion, and short of the target by 6.67 percent.

Revenue authorities said they were about to conduct a study on the reasons behind the shortfall in the collection of excise tax on alcohol, but they surmised it had to do with the drop in demand for alcoholic beverages following the implementation of the excise hike starting 2005.

Of the total excise tax collected from petroleum products, reached only P11.305 billion, compared with the previous year's 15.093billion, for a decline of 36 percent.

The collection, however, was 4 percent higher than the P10.88 billion target.

The year-on-year drop in the collection on excise tax on petroleum products was attributed to the cut in the tax rates.

The government slashed the excise tax rates on petroleum products to mitigate the effect of the value-added tax on oil.

The "Oil Reform Law 2005" expanded the coverage of the value-added tax to include previously exempted oil and other products. Excise tax collected on non-petroleum products, on the other hand, reached P438.54 million, 73 percent higher than the previous year's P348.57 million.

This reflected a rise in production of minor oil products amid efforts to boost the mining industry.

Lastly, excise tax collected from metallic mineral products and tobacco products fare reached a combined P1.77 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves earlier expressed his intention for the government to study the possibility of further increasing excise tax rates.

He noted that despite the six tax hike in 2005, excise tax rates in the Philippines were still among the lowest in the region.

But Teves said the proposed legislative measures that the Department of Finance would push in Congress this year were acting for the senior among fiscal authorities.

MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2001 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B7

BUSINESS Monday

Business Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

Where are MBA programs going?

Graduates have functional skills but firms look for leadership

By Eduardo A. Morato Jr.
Contributor

IN FRONT OF THE ASIAN INSTITUTE OF Management is a sign that advertises the offering of "an intensive 16-month MBA" course. This replaces the traditional 22-month MBA offering. Whether this time reduction will reverse the recent trend of falling enrollments (192 students in 2000) compared to the pre-Asian crisis when almost 300 students enrolled, remains to be seen. AIM's experience, however, follows a global trend.

Before 1980, American universities awarded **less than 5,000 graduate degrees in management** education annually. Then, the 60s to the 90s witnessed **in a period of growth as the baby boomers** came of age and women entered the work force **in greater numbers. This was supported by global** business and industry development.

Enrollment in graduate schools of business climbed to 25,000 annually in the 70s, 55,000 in the 80s and peaked to 80,000 in the early 90s. There were only 300 schools **offering MBAs in** 1970 but this increased to 750 in 1995. Applicants taking the MBA entrance exams declined by 20 percent thereafter. (Lohmann and Joey, 1997)

American experience

The American experience was probably **precipitated by the proliferation of MBA offer**ings in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Most **of the 400 European MBAs opened their** doors after 1979. In Asia, AIM became the **first major and premier regional MBA pro**gram when it opened in 1968. It held this **crown until each and every country in the** continent decided to establish, endow and endorse **top notch graduate schools of management of** their own. Many of these MBA schools are **heavily funded by their governments and** have attained international accreditation.

The top-ranked institutions boast of faculty coming from the best doctoral programs in the world. In fact, the standard today is to have a faculty here composed of 100 percent PhDs and DBAs.

Over the years, the MBA accounts has become more and more competitive. The very high tuition fees exacted by the best MBA schools represent a substantial investment for **the students and their parents. Moreover, the** two-year duration of full-time MBA programs **adds a substantial opportunity cost because** students lose their earning capacity during **those two years. When students calculate** their return on their MBA investment, they **take this into account.**

Interviewing AIM's Indian students who **comprise 60 percent of the MBAs, many re**portedly borrowing large sums of money to **come to the Philippines and study at AIM.** These good enough to compute for scholarships compare the financial package, number of offerings and placement prospects of the various Asian schools.

The Indian students of AIM calculate their monthly loan amortizations after graduation, at the equivalent of P50,000 to P60,000 loan amortization a month. they have to find jobs that could cover these payments. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of them apply for jobs in Singapore, Hongkong, Australia and the U.S. in fact, the Indian MBA graduates **have resourcefully decided to maintain a** "safe house" or apartment in Singapore while **they are in the process of job hunting.** This means that the major concern of the MBA student is not so much the length of the MBA course but the placement prospects for high **paying jobs. They don't mind borrowing huge** sums of money to earn a great education, but **they want a sterling return thereafter.** Come to think about it, the MBA students never complain about the training period, but they do complain about placements a lot.

Greater competition

The response of many MBA schools to **greater competition** has been to **commoditize** the product. Many European schools have de**signed** their **one business courses, with the** first four years dedicated to the undergradu**ate degree and the MBA year serving as the** MBA program.

In the US and Asia, MBA courses were shortened to 18 or, two, 12 months of full-**time schooling. Only a few, like the Indian in**stitute of Management, have kept their two-**year programming.**

If we were to focus recently to the Indian students of AIM, the positioning of their most desirable MBA program is to "guarantee 100 percent placement in the best paying jobs, preferably in the US and Asia. Most of the graduates of AIM are employed in the US, Singapore, Hongkong, Australia and the Philippines. Their starting salaries are in the range of $50,000 to $60,000 per year.

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Philam Managed Income Fund, Inc.	3.08%*	n/a	n/a
Philam Fund, Inc.	36.98%	84.61%	139.83%
Philam Strategic Growth Fund, Inc.	43.32%	103.67%	153.89%
GSIS Mutual Fund, Inc.	43.08%	98.18%	n/a

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PHILAM ASSET MANAGEMENT, INC.

Microsoft pilots VoIP remittance service in RP

Transferring money by OFWs made easy with Internet-enabled computer, cell phones

By Rica T. Obmerdos

MICROSOFT PHILIPPINES has made good on its promise to launch a service that will allow overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to keep in touch with their families and even send money home using an Internet-enabled computer or cellular phone.

Microsoft was pilot-testing the new service in the Philippines last last year. The service was designed to use a dual-mode Windows Mobile 5.0 cellular phone or a Windows XP-enabled PC with a broadband connection.

Using these devices, OFWs can communicate through Instant Messaging (IM), call home for free using the Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) and manage their money from anywhere in the world.

Microsoft, together with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and BCBC, launched the service, called "One Peso Me," on Friday. BCBC accounts holders may refer to the "One Peso Me" service as "Me-OPW" when dealing with the bank.

Microsoft Philippines managing director Antonio Javier Jr. told reporters that the initial target market were remittances, "but as we go, we will tap other services and will also add on the content depending on the requirements."

Microsoft general manager for emerging projects Randy Cassavoffer said the service was piloted in the Philippines because of its large OFW base.

OFWs are sea- and land-based Filipino workers based outside the country. Currently estimated at eight million or 15 percent of the working-age population and growing at a rate of 50,000 net new OFWs a month, OFW remittances to the country amounted to $10.7 billion in 2005 alone (or about 10 percent of the country's annual gross domestic product for the year).

Cassavoffer said BCBC was selected as a partner for the pilot project because of its tie-up with 2,295 International Banks.

BCBC vice president Raymund Jose M. Abog said OFWs and beneficiaries could avail themselves of BCBC's TeleMoney account and then request the "Me-OPW" service. A one-time enrollment fee of P 100 will be charged, after which all remittances will be made free.

The money sent is credited to their beneficiaries' accounts and can be withdrawn using ATMs.

OWWA Administrator Marianita Turqui also said that BCBC was the pilot bank for the pilot launch as the Philippines would have to tapped for the service.

It noted that the beauty of the "One Peso Me" service was that it could be used to send also to almost OWWA programs and services to the OFWS.

Turqui said the project would also be launched globally, starting in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the whole Gulf region and Europe.

Xbox 360 bests Wii, PlayStation 3 in US holiday sales

SAN FRANCISCO—XBOX 360 bested Wii and PlayStation 3 in US holiday season sales in December, while Microsoft had the Xbox 360 on store shelves a year earlier.

"The Wii was a megaseller success," Hickey said. "That was the biggest surprise." Sony and Nintendo both failed to come in number with enough units to satisfy demand.

Choice for Wii consoles remains "absolutely phenomenal" and Nintendo will likely post strong sales when they ramp up distribution of the console, Hickey said.

"Any unit Nintendo got on the shelf would have been sold, and that means Nintendo left half the dollars on the table in 2006 and will make up for it in 2007," Hickey said.

Wii is the first digital game board that everybody can play—from your child to your mom. Everyone will be buying the Wii. "Wii will suffer a severe dismal first season if comes up with a blockbuster game like we expect players many from Xbox 360.

PS3 is the highest price console, with the premium model selling for $600 while Xbox 360 is priced at $400 and Wii at $250 to the US market. AFP

A sneak peek into the latest in lifestyle gadgets

APPLE CEO Steve Jobs, left, and Cingular CEO Stan Sigman, shake hands during Jobs' keynote address at the recent MacWorld Conference & Expo in San Francisco.

LAS VEGAS—AS THE INTERNATIONAL Consumer Electronics Show prepared to close here, much of the buzz on the convention floor focused on products introduced MS Milestones away by Apple Inc.

In fact, Yoshi Tamada, chief executive of Panasonic Corp. of North America, ditched CES for part of Tuesday to fly to the Macworld expo in San Francisco just so he could sit in the audience to see CEO Steve Jobs introduce Apple's new products—the iPhone and the Apple TV set-top box—in person.

"I really wanted to be there and I was very impressed with the iPhone," Tamada said after returning to CES. Panasonic is the brand of Japanese electronics maker Matsushita Electric Industrial Co.

At every CES, the world's largest tech trade show with more than 2,700 exhibitors competing for attention, usually only a handful of gadgets manage to rise above the din.

After Apple announced its cell phone, it bragged the limelight—even though it had no official presence at the Las Vegas show.

"Apple's just one company. They send CEO as much as CIO needs them," said Christopher Hall, a columnist and analyst for Yahoo Inc.'s technology website. "But it is unfortunate that people are trying to get the word out about their products, and they're one-upped by Steve Jobs."

Still, many CES products managed to find a spotlight.

Guaranteed attention goes to the biggest TV—this year's went to Hitachi's 108-inch LCD behemoth. Other web-and-tech confidantes included a new portable music player from Sandisk Corp. and a sleek, double-sided, combination cell phone-music player from Samsung Electronics Co.

Several tech companies have unveiled products designed to bring Internet content to televisions—similar to the newly unveiled Apple TV.

Netgear Inc., for instance, unveiled its Digital Entertainer HD, a $349 media receiver that accesses high-definition videos, photos, TV shows and music stored across multiple computers on a home network and streams the content to televisions in the home. A "Hollywood Movies" function, using separate wireless stations, allows users to pause video in one room and resume it in another.

Sony Corp. showed a mobile that will hook users to upcoming lines of televisions to grab video and photos from its Internet-content partners for playback on the TV. (The partners so far include Yahoo Inc. and Time Warner Inc.'s AOL.)

A growing number of gadgets seem to defy easy categorization anywhere, anytime, even also on display.

LG Electronics Co. showcased the LG9600, a cell phone that will let users watch TV simulcasts from a variety of networks including NBC, CBS and Fox, ESPN and Comedy Central. The LG phone, as well as another by Samsung Electronics Co., will be the first to support Verizon Wireless' V Cast Mobile TV service, powered by Qualcomm Inc.'s MediaFlo technology. The Verizon TV service will be available in March.

Sanchini, the world's biggest supplier of flash memory-device products, pushed further into the media player space with its Sansa Connect, a Wi-Fi enabled MP3 player that does not require connecting to a computer to download music or stream Internet radio. It

CHINA'S largest appliance maker, Haier Group, is teaming up with a subsidiary of media giant AOL to make a wireless media player that receives new or download content without hooking up to a PC.

PETER Jakimson, left, looks at the Sony Vaio Z series notebook display at last week's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

ATTENDEES watch a High-Def Internet

JUNICHI Kutano, of Japan, tries to feel the heat generated from Sharp's 108-inch LCD television screen.

THE TORNADO allows users to transfer files from one computer to another.

Seagate sales in the US for $349.99 in March.

"A lot of different types of companies are all competing with each other at a higher level," said Gartner Inc. analyst Jon Forman. "Standalone portable players are adding wireless capability and video networking capabilities in order to compete with mobile phones."

Big TVs were not to be outdone, however, by all tiny-screen cousins. Technology giants such as Toshiba Corp., Panasonic, Samsung and Sony again dazzled attendees with the biggest and best in televisions.

Every major manufacturer improved their LCDs by doubling frames per second to 120, thereby cutting down on blurring during fast-moving scenes. Technologies to make plasma TVs display even deeper blacks and richer colors were also demonstrated.

Several companies took a stab at resolving the war over competing high-definition DVD formats. LG rolled out its "Super Multi" player that can play Blu-ray and HD DVD discs on a single tray. The player, and similar PC drive, will sell for $1,199 in early February.

Pioneer Corp. announced a high-definition BVD disc that can hold films and TV shows on both Blu-ray and HD DVD formats. The new disc is called Total BD.

LG's North American president, Michael Alvo, described its newest development as an attempt to end consumers' "confusion" over which format should win out and end battles among makers of the machines.

Everyone said the products were designed to better tie consumer needs to the ongoing process to handling a wide array of media content and formats.

"People are really trying to set up end-to-end solutions so the consumer can get it out of the box and get it working," he said. AP

Excellence trainor bullish about RP

ROMEO

PAUL ROMEO OF ROBERT AND Associates Inc., was in Manila recently to share ideas with local CEOs and managers on how to compete in a global marketplace based on his many years' experience working with Thai service and manufacturing industries and the Thai government.

He was also met with directors of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and Philexport. The Multinational Philippine Industries (PPI) also welcomed Romeo as their newest member. It hosted networking at Makati Palace, where he described to members and directors alike, how small to medium enterprises could come together to avail of cost-effective management system and business improvement consultancy. During the meeting, Robert Associates Philippines was inducted as the newest member of PPI.

At the end of his visit Robert said: "We can all sit around and bleate [the government] and each other for our lack of competitiveness and profitability but it is mainly through our own efforts that we will improve. It is good to see that the Philippines has the potential to become a serious competitor in the global arena and that many business leaders within this former Americas Philippines has an excellent team that will be working with business leaders such as these, the PCCI, PPI and Philexport over the next six months to put in place programs that will push the Philippines back up the ladder to become one of the leading Asian economies."

Robert has provided training services to Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Pakistan, has helped more than 1,000 companies achieve business excellence and international certification to worldwide such as ISO9001 and ISO 14001. He has over 35 years of experience in business and industry as a senior executive and is also managing director to Robert & Associates, a Thai-based international organization.

As a certified mentoring fellow he taught courses in Management, Communication and Human Resources for the University of Maryland and Frostburg State University in Thailand, as well as various colleges and universities in California. He has provided various lectures in business excellence and management at Bangkok University and Dhurakij Pundit University in the areas of graduate and undergraduate programs. He had also worked with Dr. Edwards Deming, guru of Quality Management Systems who helped rebuild post-war Japan. From learning, Robert learned that "[one's] job... [one's] only job... is continuous improvement."

Robert has set this as management and quality including process improvement, development of Quality Management Systems, continuous improvement, benchmarking and operational performance management. His book, "Benchmarking, a tool for continuous improvement," has been translated into Thai.

MOVEMENTS

Baker is new Ford Philippines head

FORD GROUP PHILIPPINES STRENGTHENS its leadership team via the appointment of Richard Baker as president, effective 1 January 2007. Baker succeeds Henry Co as chairman of Ford Group Philippines. Together, Baker and Co will ensure the continued growth of Ford's operations as a key domestic player and export hub in the region.

In his new role as chairman, Henry Co will focus on identifying growth opportunities for the export and domestic markets while strengthening strategic stakeholder relationships in the business community and government.

Richard Baker's appointment as president places an experienced Ford executive to move into the next phase of growth in the Philippines. Baker's extensive track record in marketing, sales and service will be key in strengthening Ford's foothold in the local and regional markets.

Baker is the former president director of Ford Motor Co. Indonesia. He has 30 years of experience working for Ford in Asia Pacific and North America. He brings a wealth of marketing, sales and service knowledge across diverse markets including South Africa, Taiwan, Japan and South America.

Specific responsibilities have included executive sales and marketing development for Asia, expansion of sales and distribution networks, dealer development and developing business growth strategies for the company brand and its products.

"The newest developments at Ford Group Philippines, with Richard Baker as president, is in line with the goal to further strengthen our position in the local market and reinforce the Philippines' vital role in Ford's operation in the Asia Pacific region," said Co. "Our new roles will allow us to focus on key aspects of our expanding business, which is underscored by strong growth and remain competitive in the domestic market and Asean export markets," Co added.

Co and Baker assumed their new roles on Jan. 1, 2007.

Del Rosario is new MAP president

ALBERT T. DEL Rosario, chair of Gruppo de Finanziaria, Associates, and former Philippine ambassador to the United States, is the president of the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) for 2007. Del Rosario is the 18th president of MAP since it was set up in 1960.

MAP is serving as the country's envoy to the United States for five years. Del Rosario has recently returned to the private sector as chairman of the board of Philippine Investing Corp., Makati Foundation for Education and Asia Trader's Insurance Corp. He serves as director in various companies and nonprofit organizations, including PLDT, Bell Globe (Philippines) Inc., First Pacific Co. (Hong Kong), PT Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk (Indonesia), Landco Pacific Corp., Philippine Causes Society and is a member of the board of governors of International Graduate University (Washington, DC).

Other officers of the MAP for 2007 are Edgar O. Chua, chair and president of Philippine Shell Petroleum Corp., as vice president; Isabel S. Tan, certified public accountant, as secretary; Pastor U. Joan, CEO of Figaro Coffee Co., as assistant treasurer, and Brinck C. Rosario, president of Siam Management and Investment Corp., as auditor.

The other members of the MAP board of governors are Peters G. del Rosario, management consultant and CEO of Six Sigma Consulting; Cesar V. Purisima, chair of Summit Point Inc., Carlos E. Ejercito, president and CEO of United Laboratories Group of Companies, and Felino A. Palafox Jr., managing partner of Palafox Associates.

Philips appoints new CFO

THE MANAGEMENT OF PHILIPS ELECtronics and Lighting Inc. has announced the appointment of Maria Bernice "Bessi" Fernandez-Ledesma as chief finance officer effective Jan. 2, 2007, succeeding Oscar Alejo who is returning to Philips Australia. Ledesma joined Philips in 1994 as corporate legislative officer, and has since risen to become regional internal audit manager and later, financial controller of the lighting division until her appointment as CFO. Prior to joining Philips, she had had stints at Joseph Gutmen/Orbit Watchtower Philippines and San Miguel Corp. A certified public accountant, she finished her business administration and accountancy degree at UP and her masters degree in business management at the Asian Institute of Management.

Where are MBA . . .

From page B1-1

ability in multinational companies with huge expatriate benefits.

However, only the very best MBA schools can make such a "guarantee". In order to do so, their student recruits and teaching faculty must be of a very high calibre. The school should have professors with "internationally-recognized brand names", having various definitive books on management. The recruits should have had sufficient experience before their MBA course, exhibiting leadership potentials and a good managerial track record. This means that they must retire the MBA at a sufficiently seasoned age.

When I was serving as the Dean of the Institute of MBA, I commissioned a survey of our graduates who regularly recruited MBAs from our school. We asked them what they were looking for in our graduates.

The top four answers were: (1) leadership qualities, (2) people skills, (3) character and personality, and (4) values. The fifth answer was Strategic Management.

When I probed some companies about our graduates who did not meet their expectations, they cited the graduates' inability to translate those unimplementable programs and their doing and people skills. Surprisingly, a UP university yielded the same results when it surveyed 5,000 executives about their preferred MBA recruits.

Functional skills

Obviously the recruiting companies were not so worried about the graduates' functional skills (such as marketing, finance and operations management). They were more concerned about the graduates' as a grounded and dynamic leader who can lead people and operationalize plans.

What do the surveys mean for the future of the MBA programs? For most schools, they would be content to train students in the tools and techniques of business management. For the schools who want to provide the greater value, they would put more emphasis on leadership development and self-mastery. Corporations have also expressed the need for greater cross-functional skills, which would entail higher organizational coordination and orchestration. Hence where the people and doing skills would be most challenging. However, there are not the lions of most MBA schools who prefer to "teach subjects" rather than "master students" and there is a world of difference between the two. The former focuses on the knowledge content, the latter emphasizes the person.

In order to pursue the preferred MBA paradigm, it would be wise to take heed of Peter Drucker's philosophy that management is a liberal art because it is steeped in dynamic social organizations. This direction is easier to espouse but hard to implement. New education methodologies with highly illustrating and human philosophies must be invented or reinvented. But that is the subject of another discourse.

Preserving . . .

From page B1

5. Differences should be leveraged.

As fellow scientists adopted and improved upon Appert's discovery, they leveraged his ideas to suit their goals of commercial rather than military success. Eventually, Appert's ideas were spurs in the canning industry.

For information on John Maxwell's work in mastery@inquirer.pk or call 923-2040/2732 God bless!

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BUSINESS Monday

Preserving innovation leadership

AS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE stood up generals' companion, he was astonished by the fatality rate of his army. For every soldier lost in combat, four were dying from diseases. Most of the unknowns were caused by spoiled food or malnutrition.

Like any great leader, Napoleon knew the grunt rested upon the well-being of the men who fought for him on the front lines. Weak, starving and ill-fated soldiers would be worthless on the battlefield. "An army marches on its stomach," Napoleon concluded. An army must be fed well to fight well.

Everyday runs his soldiers dairy rations. Napoleon needed butter, but he had to find a new way of churning designed to work around the constraints of usual military cultures. Napoleon announced that if he could preserve food for longer durations, then his army could operate farther from its supply lines

IN THIS ISSUE

- Sculptors tackle 'New Asia' /C2
- Miracle novel /D4

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chuchi Bancil-Perrenon Editor/Editor Lito B. Zulueta

Photographs of conscience

Photographer Jun de Leon captures the real lives of real people in a book that mixes style, art and heart

KINGETH Calonque (here with one of his globally-renowned designs) wears his Conscience.

STYLE, INGENUITY AND PHILANTHROPY COME TOGETHER IN "Wear Your Conscience," an 87-page coffee-table photo book featuring Philippine society's cream of the crop in business, entertainment, sports, art, media and charity.

Supporting a romantic advocacy, the subjects wear Benetti's special Wear Your Conscience clothing line, which stands as a gentle reminder to people to give back and pay the blessings forward. It highlights the significance of social responsibility amid today's consumerism and hedonism.

The individuals featured in the book are living proof that generously giving back to the community remains unrivaled in living. They are living proof that success means reaching indeed it is shared.

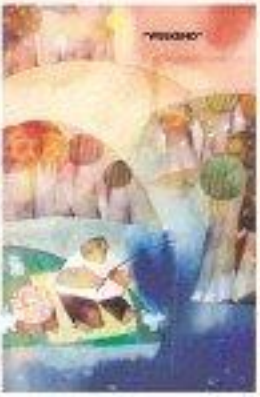
"Wear Your Conscience is our way of keeping the spirit of charity alive. We aim to encourage others to help and be mindful of those who need assistance," Benetti said.

Collaborating in the book are Jun de Leon, social chronicler Inzel Manzano and Philip De Dapkong, retail expert Benetti.

The coffee-table book is for the benefit of the Ilo Alden Habal Foundation (IAH), a non-profit organization that promotes the love and habit of reading among Filipino children.

PHOTOGRAPH(S)

"Kid's Harvest"



"PISONG"

"HUNT Harvest"

Dreamy scenes by Obemio

"DREAMY"

WITH DREAMY SCENES culled from the world of memories, Noel Obemio lends soothing lightness to artsole-limited subjects in "Big Dreams," on display at Ulol Gallery, 2/F, Greenbelt, Intersection High St., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Depicting such scenes as a man fishing along a riverbank or playing violin by the woods against rolling hills, Obemio visualizes beauty not only in terms of conjurance but also idyllic calm and ease.

"Big Dreams" runs until Jul. 19. Call 908.3702.

Sculpture without instruction

By Benjamin V. Alunig
Contributor

ON THE DOMINANT AND YET multifary theme of the Asian "condition," four sculptors have set out to make a new direction for the art. Sculptors exhibiting their latest works at Ayala Galleries starting Jun. 20.

Indeed, quietly but firmly, sculptors Soil Chua, Nonoy Gopio, Jun Vicedo and Elmer Chan have been pursuing one an array of figurative and nonfigurative pieces that decidedly can excite popular interest in sculpture locally.

Their exhibit, "Seasons of Soil," brings together new and old works of "personal" figures which, presumably, Asians can identify their own images as the themes of human life (or lack of them). Asian love and folk beliefs.

Some of the pieces show a diversity in manner and style on the influence of contemporary Western trends, but most of the exhibited works have the distinct Asian directness, a voice without artifice, and simple grace and ease.

Using only a few of their favorite materials—metal, glass and wood—these sculptors speak of the importance of sculptural art in life. They articulate much of human feelings and original lines. They can be turned for better relationships, or where emotions can edify the sensual nature of life.

The sculptors also, convincingly, take that "look" at things from all angles and perspectives, and are stimulated by three-dimensional objects. Some form attention to contrasting strengths and solidity with fluidity when they shape figures and forms on their chosen subjects.

All is immediately coherent even to the average viewer who can better appreciate sculpture without instruction.

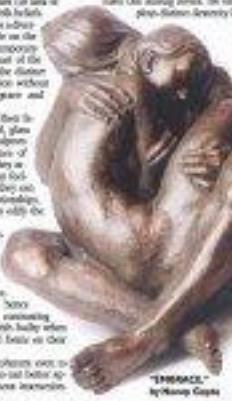
Chua's Oona sculpture work very hard, his three-line creations don't show the effort.

Among the four artists, Chua likes most doing contemporary figurative pieces, which he describes as "pure form showing balance and fluidity." Most of his pieces easily connect to the viewer as they express vividly an emotional, rather than overdone, act "naturalness." One of his works, titled "Longing," showing a lady in white seated on a ledge, best expresses his work "method": "I look for that moment when a new form comes to life, a form that embodies a presence, a sense of life in the set piece."

The principal works seem to favor the classical female nude and the intimate one relating human to human. Chua's figures demonstrate a fine sense of balance and proportion, while Gopio's pieces show a fascination for the female body in its many moods and forms.

Vicedo's sculptures are more abstract, with a strong sense of design and structure. Chan likes to work with wood, creating pieces that are sensuous and evocative.

"LONGING," by Soil Chua



"EMBRACE," by Nonoy Gopio

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MARGARITA Delgado and Lilian Zobel with the students of the Lumbaguio Victorious Elementary School. At left, Paolo Prieto and Sandy Pesto-Hernandez

Photographs of conscience

HOTSHOT couple Kris Aquino and James Yap get intimate and reflexive.

"Our vision is to build a nation of readers," said SM director Margarita Delgado. "We work with public schools all over the country, providing resources to increase students in their reading a pair of their daily lives. We are very thankful to partners such as Nine Year Consultants—its Bench and everyone who lent their generous support in this endeavor. The help this book provides goes a long way in furthering our cause."

Most Vital Connection features 80 "easy to-fit" portraits. De Leon captures the stark Zobel photographs of the Zobel brothers Jaime Augusto and Fernando; Prieto siblings Paolo and Sandy Hernandez; Schoolgirl sisters Ate, Robbie, Marcia, Faith and Gino Ito Abby Bodian's Margarita Delgado and Lilian Zobel; a sentimental image of Nonoy Fernando with daughters Lisa, Monique and Marissa; artist Ben Cabrera, Ben Zobel Jr. with daughters Paloma and Monica; former Miss Universe Margie Fernando with daughters Camila and Veronica; Chot Dominguez, Sophie Braganza and Oleg Monleon, shutterbug Thessa Chengbun, Noel Synnegros, Ricky Yuvienco and Moses Alcab; Richard and Lucy Torres-Gomez, and Kris Aquino and Bimby Yap.

The Most Vital Connection book and special clothing line are available at Bench, Human, Bench and Superbench stores. The project is promoted by Bench with support from 2NO and Alaska.

"TWO Brothers," by Malang

Malang's birthday show

CELEBRATING HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY Malang remains a one-man exhibit titled "Watercolor Paper" at the SM Megamall Art Center. He now lives Jan. 20-Feb. 4, the exhibit features new and never-before-seen works.

Malang has been celebrating his birthday with a major exhibition every three years. He has been one of artists, the mediums he adores the most, he has been a constant addressing.

The theme Malang has for "Watercolor" is diverse. over the years it that he always tries to push every single day, something a few times before he can breakfast or reaching up a few decade before he goes to bed. Painted in the late, though he also keeps is interesting by being open to new values and new painting techniques.

A self-taught painter, Malang began as a designer for the Manila Chronicle and movie publicists. The Pure magazine.

"Watercolor Paper" is organized by Pinto Gallery. The SM Megamall Art Center is at the 4/F, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City. Call 6344224.

Visual Arts

Book on Fabian de la Rosa

THE DEVELOPING BOOK, "FABIAN DE LA ROSA and His Times," published by Philippine Port of Hotel Publishing, will be launch Sept. on Jan. 17, 6:00 p.m., at the SM Megamall Art Center. Author Ramon Reyes, Curator Cecilia Chiong-Fajardo, UP Diliman. The exhibition will also open the exhibit of a short film on the SM Megamall Art Center. De la Rosa was one of the most artists of Philippine art and was a pioneer in the development of modern Philippine painting. He is known for his landscapes and portraits. He is also known for his landscapes and portraits. He is also known for his landscapes and portraits.

MERZON and Rhea de la Rosa

Boldan at West

West Gallery, 4/F, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, opens with a new exhibition by Boldan titled "Boldan at West." The exhibition features paintings and sculptures by Boldan. The exhibition runs from Jan. 17 to Feb. 4.

"GUMAMELA," by Boldan

De la Rosa siblings in Seattle

The Seattle Center Presentations and Cultures presents an exhibit of the works of Rhea de la Rosa and Jan. 20. Four artist will hold four shows depicting Filipino culture. The siblings are the children of the late Fabian de la Rosa. The event is under the auspices of the Filipino Arts and Cultures under the direction Regie and Dreams.

Dogtighter at Asia Art Gallery

Juliano Dogtighter will hold his 37th one-man show on Jan. 26. The show will be the inaugural exhibit of the Asia Art Gallery at the SM Mall of Asia (Unit 3-103, Entertainment Mall). Scenes of horses are Rice La Pena, Michael Say and Percy Lee. Call 8515882.

"ARIONG the Flowers," by Jaime Dogtighter

'Coffee with Artists' at Artspace

"Coffee with Artists," a collection shows, large scale paintings and sculptures exhibits a small, with two or more artists' sale on Jan. 10-21. SM City Manila 4, Artspace. Artists include Bert Nguio, Jude Hermoso, Anton Bien Nepomuceno, John Briones, Salvador Ching, Florence Cinco, Ferdinand Doctolero, Joey Ejay, Rod Lacambra, Lindibel, Buddy Mendiola, Rod Pardo, Tina Ramos, Harley del Rosario, Ivan Rosas, Chino Trinidad, Ronaldo Valdez.

"WOMAN in White"

"BUSSINES," by Portal

New gallery

CALIBO BAYMAN (3/F, 8 DE PINZON, BRGY. dos Mas), for Bonifacio Global City) will hold daily open to doors for art lovers and collectors beginning Jan. 17. For its inaugural show, Calibo Bayman will show maximum gallery works of several leading artists who have been regularly selected for inclusion in the Sotheby's and Christie's auctions, such as National Artists Arturo Luz and Jose Joya and Philippine Pena, Antonio Dumlao, Arturo Luz, Jose Joya, Benedicto Cabrera, Nena Saguil and Roberto Aguilar Alcuaz, among others. Call 9520-276 LOOP for details.

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LIFESTYLE

KABATAAWAN: Sr. Scholastica Band program with Sr. Mary Placid, OSB, dean of St. Scholastica's College School of Music

100 years of beautiful music

St. Scholastica's School of Music is holding a yearlong series of musical activities to commemorate the founding of the school

By Amada Ma. Guerrero
Lifestyle Editor

THE FIRST BENEDICTINE MUSICIANS arrived in Manila from Germany in 1906 and established a convent school which would become St. Scholastica's College (and which celebrated its centennial last year).

The nuns had observed then that the Filipinos "love music so much that they cannot live without it. Most of the children display an outstanding talent for this art as well as for dancing, an understanding far beyond their years, and perfect natural grace..."

Music, from then, foreigners were taking note of the Pinoy's exceptional ability in the performing arts.

The Benedictine sisters asked their motherhouse to send a piano teacher here, and a pedagogue arrived in the distinguished person of Sr. Stephen Kurtz, from Illinois, Germany, who had given up a promising career as a concert pianist to take up the veil.

She arrived in October 1907, and, intent immediately started to give piano lessons. The story is that a German benefactor of the Sisters, Augustus Heinrich, went around Manila (where the school was located) singing a bell

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MALL EVENTS THIS JANUARY

STARMALL LAS PIÑAS
872-5249

Mondays, Comedy Nights @ The Ship, 7pm
Wednesdays, Live Bands @ The Ship, 7pm
Fridays & Saturdays, Live Bands @ Marks Bar, 8pm
Saturdays, Storytelling @ Books for Less, 3pm

STARMALL EDSA SHAW
718-1886

Jan. 16, 23, & 27, Raging Divas Contest "Sawa Mo Toh!", 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 20, Mr. & Ms. JRU Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 21, Kim Chui Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 28, Sugar Mercado Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Tuesdays, Stand-Up Comedy @ Cuba Libre, 9pm
Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays, Live Band @ Cuba Libre, 9pm

METROPOLIS ALABANG
850-4752

Jan. 20, Landscape Exhibit, 10am, 3/L
Jan. 21, Muntinlupa Dance Company Cultural Show, 4pm, 2/L
Jan. 27, Food Demo by Spices and Foodmix House, 2pm, 3/L
Jan. 28, Mojofly Mall Tour, 4pm, 2/L
Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, Live Band, 8pm, 2/L

starmall EDSA - SHAW
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2007

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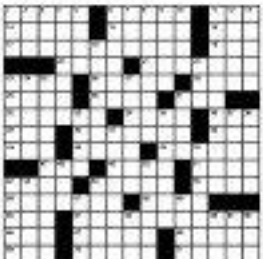
DAILY CROSSWORD



HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — By Dave Green

2			1					
		6	9	3	8	7		
	7	3				1	9	
1	4				7		3	
	5						2	
	6		3				4	1
	3	9				2	8	
		4	2	6	5	3		
					3			6

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	7	4	3	6	2	9	8	5
9	8	6	7	1	4	5	2	3
5	3	2	8	5	9	4	1	6
3	5	9	2	7	6	8	4	1
8	2	7	4	1	3	6	5	9
4	6	1	9	5	8	7	3	2
7	4	5	6	2	1	3	9	8
6	1	3	5	9	7	2	6	4
2	9	8	1	3	5	7	1	4

TOTOY Bayaba, Dennis Delimos Mel Chiongbi (treasurer); Jun Salgado; Melo Nera (vice president); Ogie Arce (president); Ben Fernales (founding chair); Dingdong Bautista; Gerino Maldonado; Chito Segara; Rommel Gonzales; and Mario Bueta. Back row: Steve de Leon; Art Borja; Hernan Nadurata; Dan Pandian; Rev. Fr. Leopoldo Jocson, SVD; Rev. Fr. Alfredo Salvano; Manolo Estrella; Yoyo Lawsan; Ricky Miranda; and Dennis Matunar

"THE NUMBER 1," patron of Congregacion del Santisimo Nombre del Niño de Jesus

Fiesta del Sto. Nino 2007

THE CONGREGACION DEL SANTISIMO Nombre del Niño Jesus will celebrate this year's 20th anniversary **from with a rare exhibit** of more than 400 images of the Sto. Niño at the PSE banking hall on Mesapagat Avenue, climaxing with a grand procession of more than 200 beautifully decorated carrozas complete with colorful all-ethnic tribes and headbands.

The exhibit opens Jan. 18 with a solemn Mass at 5 p.m. The exhibit, open from 9 a.m.-9 p.m., from Jan. 20, noon at 9 p.m. from the Philtrade complex to the Luneta Grandstand. **Registration of his Niño images at** the PSE banking hall is on Jan. 15-17, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.

This year's celebration will be led by the 2007 Hermanon Mayores, among those invited are Louie and Mollie Abaya; Roberto and Marlene Rano; Henry Balmoceda; Marites Apalo Gonzales; Dr. Edwin and Dr. Arlene Catalino; Reynaldo and Evelyn de Castro; Hans Sia and Norma Chan; Dan and Chita Chan; Imelda Guinnigan; Pe and Felicia Gayle; Ricky Garcia; Adrian Gonzales-Sibulo and Bernardino Lucero; who do Gonzalez; Lydia Gregorio; Williana and Myla Siew; Nena Aguinaldo and Grace Ann Antonio and Vicky Magsalin; Milagros Mangaliman; Dr. Jose Morales; Arturo and Evangeline Orosco; Marietta Paredes; Richard Quinchio; Fr. Roberto and Cynthia Ramirez; Vivian M. Sanvicente Johnny and Carol Regge; Ernesto and Chi-Chi Eulan; Marvina Sanchez; Paulino and Nelly Sia; Jorge Allan Singco; Otelia Trinidad, and David and Gina Yu.

Ms. Jelenia Nathalie C. Nell is Secretariat.

The 2007 exhibit will be distinguished by its theme of universal love as exemplified by the Holy Child.

Providing the art of this particular love and devotion, the Child Jesus elected locals devotees in a gallery of the Church's saints and martyrs, among them, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Felix Cantalice, St. Rose of Lima, St. Julie of the Cross, St. Veronica Guilliani.

The officers and board members of the Congregacion are Ben Fernales, founding chair; Alex Chua, chair of the board; Ricky Miranda, president; Chito Segara, vice president; Jesse Nell, secretary; Mel Chiongbi, treasurer; Manolo Estrella, Steve de Leon, Nadie Elana and Gemes Malabanan, board members.

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Pantagalog P4

to inform residents that a piano teacher was now available at the Benedictine Sisters' Convent.

"That bell literally rang in the country's **first school of music, and St. Baptista would** go on to become the pioneer of formal music education in the country," a short history of the St. Scholastica's College (SSC) School of Music declares.

That school numbered from Manila to San Marcelino and finally in its present location in Singalong, Manila, which sees them "a make-talented transplanted."

It has long been an outstanding musical institution in the country, thanks to the legacy of St. Baptista who died in 1942 during the Japanese occupation.

One of her students was National Artist Lucrecia R. Kasilag, who recalled that St. Baptista encouraged her to compose and "search your Philippine musical literature."

The SSC School of Music is now celebrating its centennial. At a recent press conference at SSC, dean Sr. Mary Placid, OSB, announced a yearlong series of musical activities to commemorate the founding of the school, and to pay tribute to its founder.

A mini-concert was staged during the presscon with performers representing three generations: violinist Jericho Oliveta, 7, and soprano

PMDE lists based at St. Scholastica's College School of Music

Marian Miguel, 21. Both talents accompanied on the piano by Ging Zuniega's, and pianist Cresente Manera, 90. The latter attended the keyboard with signs helping her years.

The celebration starts on Jan. 28 with the ringing of the bells and the release of 100 balloons, among other felicitous events. February and March will see concert tours in Cavagan, Pampanga, and Los Baños respectively, and there will be a Metro Quaich concert **with the Manila Symphony Orchestra II** in April.

In May a "Music for the People" concert will be staged, followed by concerts at both light **rail terminals (LRT and MRT) in June. July is** a "rest" month. In August a "100 Years of Music" exhibit will be launched, followed in September by the symbolic groundbreaking of the St. Baptista Bell-y Hall.

October, the month St. Baptista arrived in Manila, will be capped by the planting of 100 trees in Tanay, Rizal, and a versatile Concert featuring 100 voices and 100 fingers. The centennial climax to a close in November with a St. Cecilia's Concert.

St. Baptista once fervently declared: "Grant to my desire to see the dear children of this Fair rise in the musical world to the same level at those in the West."

Her dream has been followed, and her desire fulfilled.

MUSIC outreach project of St. Scholastica's in Dasmariñas, Cavite

Varsitarian history exhibit opens at UST Museum

THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS Museum of Arts and Sciences will open the exhibit "The Varsitarian at 80: The Struggle and the Glory of the Campus Press in the Philippines," on Jan. 16, 10:30 a.m.

The exhibit chronicles the history of The Varsitarian, the official student paper of UST and the oldest and most respected Catholic campus paper in the Philippines. The paper turns 79 tomorrow and the exhibit kicks off the celebration for its 80th anniversary in 2008.

Founded in 1929 by Jose Villa Panganiban, who would later head the National Language Institute and write the "Diccionario Pilipino-Ingles-Pilipino," the Varsitarian has produced top journalists, writers, leaders and even National Artist (Emeritus) Nick Joaquin. Lyndon L. Dano Headline-ce Arellano, J. Rizaldy Narvaez).

It is the only campus paper to have an entry in the Cultural Center of the Philippines Encyclopedia for the Arts.

The exhibit is part of a broader series on the history of printing in the Philippines.

The 79th Varsitarian anniversary celebration will open with a Mass at 9 a.m., at the Civil Law lobby to be led by Varsitarian alumni priests Fr. Ariel Litton, OP, rector of Colegio de Santo Tomas, Fr. Nicanor Lating of the Diocese of Malolos, and Fr. Isidro Martinez of the Archdiocese of Manila.

The exhibit will be formally opened at 10:30 a.m., by UST Rector Magnificus Fr. Rolando de la Rosa, OP.

At 12 noon, UST officials and Varsitarian staffers and alumni will formally inaugurate the new office of the paper at the UST Tan Yan Kee Student Center building.

The exhibit will run until Jan. 31. Call 406-1611 loc. 8225 (Varsitarian office) or 731-1815 (UST Museum).

Para sa mga inindyan.

Sexy opening salvo for 2007

METRO MAGAZINE LEDGES IN 2007 WITH ITS annual Body Issue featuring 13 of the hottest celebrities in town, including model and swimmer Ducheng Tiu, Miss Earth Priscilla Meneses, DJ and Ms Universe Tropic finalist Faith Amigo, basketball star Dong Kramer, actor Patrick Garcia, and model/emcee designer Isabel Rivera.

Photographed by Bernie Salvacion, the 16-page spread was shot around the theme of bitchiousness.

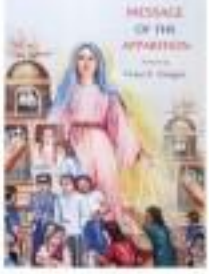
On the cover is 1993 Miss Universe Aimee Santos, who reveals how she has been coping since her divorce from singer Mark Anthony and why she considers the Philippines her second home.

In Talk, Metro records up women and asks them: "Are you ready to be single for life?"

Also read about: skin-whitening injections, the hands-free guide for the Achilleyin, and fearless fashion forecasts for 2007.

Metro Magazine is published monthly by 888-CBN Publishing and is available nationwide. For orders and subscriptions, call 415227 local 4688.

Novel on apparition to be launched



CAN FICTION DEAL WITH MIRACLES, SAY, the apparition of the Virgin Mary and stay believable, and become an exemplar of what is known as truth in literature? Grace is making sense to question the reality of miracles if we are there working on the lives of real people? Is the Blessed Mother's Apparition just a wanton creation of people who want have it to sustain an inconsistent faith, or is the Apparition not anything we have to count because it is always deep within us?

When the late Cesar S. Tiangco was in his 40s, retired after having served for decades as principal of Montalupa National High School and of Rizal High School in Pasig, the world's biggest high school in terms of enrollment, he began writing a novel. He had been teacher and principal, but all along he had been writing fiction—short stories, a number of which were published by the Philippines Free Press.

One of his stories was chosen by Asiaweek Magazine as one of the three stories in its annual selection. His novel "Message of the Apparition," set in a small town, quite probably in his native Rizal province, tells the individual stories of a wide cast of characters living out their lives—of poverty, misery, crime and corruption...religious folk who are at the same time devout and superstitious, a priest who died foretelling that the Blessed Mother will come as an Apparition and an incumbent priest who must provide over its advent...and at the final moment finding their redemption in the apparition right there in the old church.

"Message of the Apparition" will be launched Jan. 21, very close to the author's First death anniversary, by the family of Tiangco and former students of his at the grammar of the old Montalupa High School, now Montalupa National High School, which Mr. Tiangco, upon the request of the late Bureau of Private Education Director B. Mina Jr. and Dr. Alfredo M. Bunoz Jr., put up right after Liberation, in August 1945. Bunoz's son, Presidential Spokesperson and Press Secretary Ignacio R. Bunoz, wrote the foreword to the novel of his late teacher and school principal.

"Mr. Tiangco captures thoughtful work the various degrees of faith, or lack of it, among the characters: the church lay leaders, protestants, non-speakers ticket vendor, town mayor, politicians and the town clerk-acting concerning newspaper editor. He graphically portrays the social problems which we have had for generations: patronage politics, illegal gambling, usury, petty corruption. He describes the gigantic battles fought by the central characters, Father Antonio, and before that, his predecessor, Father Damian, against world's temptation. On his deathbed, Father Damian foretold the appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary which was revealed to him in his dream," Secretary Bunoz said.

This is a story of a people's faith, which sometimes wavers, but always finds its home to the Blessed Mother. Dr. Lorda B. Tiangco, the author's youngest daughter, said: "It was like Tiangco's fondest hope to have his novel published. He thought that it has a good story and is about people he cared about, their weaknesses and foibles, and also their simple devotion to our the Blessed Mother."

Published by Context Communications International Inc. Email epr@pressnet.com. Call 7355130, 4115421 or 6412006.

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Visa transactions may also be registered through the Promo website. (www.bilimasa.com/visa)
Draws will be conducted bi-weekly starting November 21, 2006 (total of 6 winners).
Promo period: November 12, 2006 - January 10, 2007.

VISA
All it takes.

"SEASONS of Transitions"

'Escape' artist

"ESCAPE," AN ART EXHIBITION of ultra-modern paintings by 19-year-old expressionist Ihara Abrigo, opens Jan. 17 at 6 pm latte (915.6044), Serendra, Fort Global City, Taguig.

Highly adept in art appropriation, Abrigo, a graduate PLM, Mandaluyong and Hall for Awards finalist, weaves graphic collages by lifting various images from different cultural contexts and juxtaposing them in a new environment. He then fleshes up with acrylic life, giving them new significance in the process. The result, at first glance, appears to be a random amalgam of historical and fictional elements or curios. Fragments of people, animals, objects and even alien creatures are depicted whimsically alongside each other.

His artworks are very bold and provocative with titles such as "Pain Spoils Super Smash Cue," "Tomorrow Today" and "Catcher's Chop." That, along with a cast of realism and the surreal, adds an instriguing appeal to his works, evidence of a bright, young and rebellious mind at work.

ENTERTAINMENT

Edie Enerio G. Valente

New 'dogg pound' on its way

By Kathryn Fatima Reyes

RANDY JACKSON

RANDY JACKSON LEADS forward to the new "dogg pound."

This year's "American Idol," 2006 People's Choice awardee for Best Reality TV Competition, has three coasts to outfit—either on Wednesday (on Star World), 8 p.m. live; 8 p.m. primetime; and 11:30 p.m. late night replay).

Jackson...who coined "dogg pound" to refer to "Idol" semifinalists—and fellow judges Simon Cowell and Paula Abdul caravaned across 22 cities during this season's auditions. Jackson says they spent "ten days in each of three cities—Seattle, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Memphis, Birmingham, New York and San Antonio—listening to about 200 hopefuls daily.

Said to be the "most memorable" of the three judges, Jackson reveals in this exclusive interview that the upcoming "Idol" will have more stickers like Constantine Maroulis, DeAsia and Chris Daughtry ... and a lot of Taylor Hicks types!

Jackson says he has spoken with Mariah Carey about the possibility of her guesting on the show.

I just took on the Internet, it was also reported that Jennifer Lopez and Paul McCartney is being courted by the producers to participate in the new season.]

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Every year, they add a few breaks to the show. Anything new this year that we can expect?

I'm going to marry more yellow and blue going in honor of Coach Barclay. I'm going to wear dressed like a Jedi every week like Coach Barclay. No. We have a few things that we change, but, I think the formula is pretty much what it is. I mean, you'll see a couple of wrinkles here and there, but of course, I can't tell you what [exactly].

Simon is going to dye his hair red.

And you're going to dress in lime green?

No, I think more since I am going to do the Jedi thing like Coach Barclay, I think I'm going to be wearing [the] green. I think I'm going to wear a cape. I'll be the new McDonald's.

The success of the show continues to surprise people every year. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger. What would have to happen for the show to suddenly not be as successful as it was the year before?

This is the greatest music talent show ever, right? I know that [...Simon, and Paula...we are...] really think about the ratings. I think we just go out and kind of do what we do. There's an abundance of talent in America and there will never be any shortage of talent out there.

I mean, you see what's happening to Jennifer Hudson, who didn't even win that year (2004), that tells you right there that there is a lot of great talent around. This is about finding it. The show will be successful as long as we go out and find great talent. I don't know what the number is but we gotta go to each year. I don't even think about that really because to me "American Idol" is a search for the next superstar. It's not a search for the next ratings boost.

Have you run into Jennifer Hudson since "Dreamgirls"?

Yes. I went to the "Dreamgirls" premier here in LA and talked to her for quite a long time, and then I saw her at a dinner for Carousel of Hope. Still here in LA, that was honoring Clive Davis and Quincy Jones. Again, we talked for a long time.

Did she ask for advice?

No, but she did say, "Thank you for making me your wildcard pick." She was my wildcard pick that year.

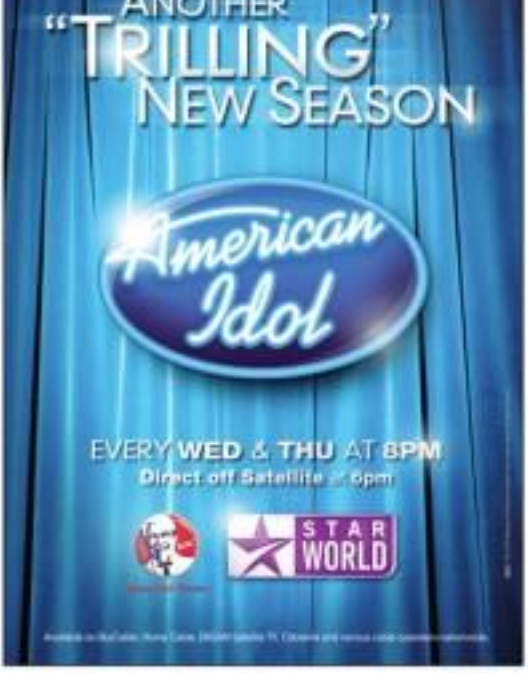
I just say to all of them, "Make sure you make the right record." That's what it's all about. We talk about it on the show and we get a lot of flack from it on the show, but it's all about great songs on the show, great songs after the show. That's what makes hit records, great songs.

How do you explain Jennifer Hudson losing on "American Idol" and now blowing away

NEWS, January 15

Did You Know...

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA—BRAVO SAYS IT IS MAKING A TV SERIES ABOUT HAJJA Abdul. "Hey Paula" will follow Abdul, 44, as she films a new season of Fox "American Idol," weeks ahead of "Bravo: The Movie" sneak showings last year-centerfolds him. The pop-culture network's GO's MSC celebrity, has hits with "Project Runway" and "Top Chef," and has announced that the upcoming fifth season of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" will be to last. AP



Feedback

From Mail (mailto:feedback@inquirer.com.ph) 864 Ortigas St., Mandaluyong City, 1550.

I notice that many actors in the Philippines endorse liquor and even cigarettes. In fact, minors are not allowed to do that. Why can't we follow this same guideline? Even in the local shows, why don't we see the actors drink alcohol, or, if there, since doing so would obviously send the wrong signal to their fans. Celebrities should be role models for good health.

MMTA

METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

SM CINEMA

movietime SHOWTIME

Your life as a movie

New 'dogg pound' ...

from page E1

Reynoso in "Dreamgirls"?

Personally, I don't think she blows away Beyonce in "Dreamgirls." I think Jennifer is amazing in "Dreamgirls" (God, I think Jennifer Hudson, who originally sang the song, was... more amazing. It's harder to be the original, than to be the second or the third. I think [Jennifer has] done amazingly well, but I wanted people every time "The girl that was in the movie who Beyonce fired her and I you want to know why she was, go back and listen to her rendition of "Summertime." It's the best "Idol" performance to date. That's why she was.

The point is that, in "Dreamgirls," the plays someone who has an amazing voice, but is bounced because she doesn't have the looks and the charisma of the others. Some people thought that's what happened in "American Idol," too—that the Idol no. 10 every year, maybe one of the best ones, but that she just, for whatever reason ... I don't know ... looks, charisma, was bounced sooner than she should have been.

How do you feel about that?

I think she was bounced sooner than she should have been. But if you remember that season, and it's hard for people to go back and think about it, people don't remember that she was my wildcard pick. We had our own "Dreamgirls" this season. We had LaToya London, Jennifer Hudson and Sanaia Reeves. So it was just going to be, who was the best singer at the time.

Fortunately for Sanaia, as I said, her "Summertime" is the only [performance] on "Idol" that one can that gave me goose bumps, the three that out...the deserved is on that season. I mean, look, you saw Below Deadbird, 2003) was. It's not about twilight. It's not about souls.

Do you mind having guest judges?

I could definitely live without them. The three weeks because of the three of us on the panel, and what we do, and how we interact. I don't think we need guest judges. I think when people came into the arena that we judge in, it's often a little awkward and a little hard for them. I think people look at the show as a fan and go, "I could do that. I'd love to be there." It's almost like saying I could be a rocket scientist, I wouldn't. I don't even know. If I could pitch little league, I mean, [maybe] ... I mean, I could do it, but it is going to be great to see you just show for the TV fans time!

You were quoted as saying on Entertainment Weekly that you're getting back up Mariah Carey and ask her to ... measure the birds and sing on the shows. Is that going to happen?

I don't know. I've been thinking about it. We've tossed it around a bit. I think she'll be great because, for me, she and Mariah and Celine are the three great divas. I mean some of the better singers of our time.

Have you talked with Mariah about it?

I mentioned it to her. We'll see. You've got to stay tuned on that one.

She was open to it?

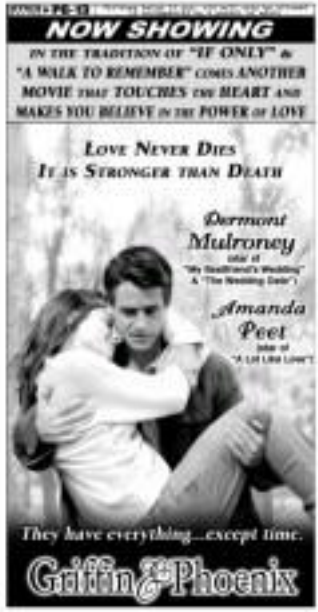
Yes, I mean, definitely. So we'll see what happens.

We're looking forward to seeing all of the horrible, horrible, horrible singers this time. We don't care about the good ones.

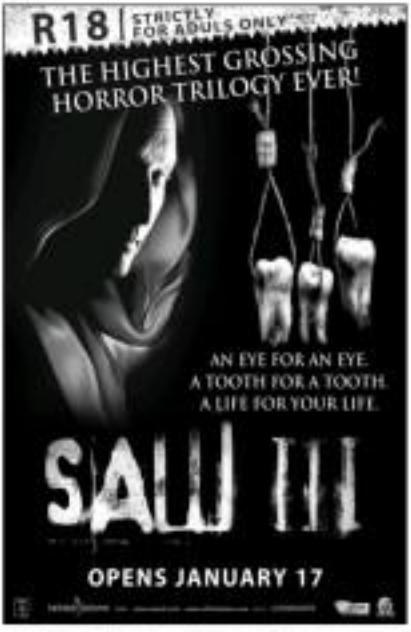
You sound like Simon Cowell.

Give us an idea ... who is everyone going to be talking about, how bad is he or she?

Every season, there's a number of those. You're going to have to



'I don't think we need guest judges. When [other] people come into that arena, it's often a little awkward and hard for them'



'Maxi' grows up ... and viewers suggest rehab

OPENS WEDNESDAY
ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE EFFECTS-DRIVEN FILM OF 2007

LIVE THE ADVENTURE
ARTHUR
AND THE INVISIBLES

NEWS THAT BOY THAT'S Jinkuel Lopez, star of "Ang Pag-ibabalagi ni Maestro Oliveros," all grown-up at 15.

Lopez is now a cast member of the ABS-CBN soap opera, "Sana Maulit Muli," where he plays Kim Chiu's best friend.

Marlon plays the character Jerome Bato—a typical rumor who's "gay in school, but straight at home."

For whatever it's worth, the guy ends up with the most innocent-looking tainted guy characters.

Dolas at the Big Dome

Movie Queen Aiza Seguerra made one of her very rare public appearances at the birthday bash of Megastar Sharon Cuneta on Jan. 9 at the Araneta Coliseum.

La Aiza, who played mom to Sharon in the 1982 movie "My Only Love," says the singer-actress is one of her "favorite screen daughters."

"He was such adorable. She calls me Mama and I call her sarah," Smallville Sadies.

That feeling instinctly Dolas Mama said Imilia, of course, to Shar's real-life mom. Divine Caridina Cuneta.

Duet/dialogue

Speaking of the birthday diane ...

When Mega sang a duet with grown-up daughter KC Concepcion, the mom ended up in tears.

Imma the lyrics of the song, "Wood Beneath My Wings," hit too close to home. For the spectators, it was like hearing the two of them reminisce a private conversation—to front of 35,000 people.

Is she drunk?

NEW YORK—American Idol" judge Paula Abdul successfully media interviews on Friday as we online video emerged of the television star drinking and gatecrashing her way through a TV interview a day earlier.

Some viewers of the footage posted on the popular online video site YouTube.com suggested she should head into rehab because it appeared she had been drinking. Abdul's spokesman, Jeff Ballard, denied she was under the influence of alcohol or was on some kind of medication and said Abdul never drank.

Ballard said the interview was one of the last in a string of promotion and answer sessions she had done over two days on Thursday ahead of a new season of "American Idol," debuting this week on Fox.

"She was exhausted," said Ballard. "She was sitting in a room with just a camera and a mic on, and she somehow dropped the sound twice, which is why she rolled her eyes."

Reuters

Madonna: More adoptions!

NEW YORK—Madonna has urged more people to adopt children from Africa, submitting the comments by actress and fellow adoptive mother Angelina Jolie after she adopting from countries with clearly defined adoption laws.

NATHAN LOPEZ

GARY Valenciano's daughter gets an ovation Tuesday at the Araneta Coliseum. Alleap: "Overwhelmed" ... standing ovation

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AT THE CINEMAS

G1	1 BLOOD DIAMOND	2 ROB-B-HOOD	3 ERAGON	4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
G4	1 ERAGON	2 KASAL KASALI KASALO	3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	
	4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	5 ROB-B-HOOD	6 ERAGON	7 BLOOD DIAMOND
GB1	1 BLOOD DIAMOND	2 ERAGON		
GB3	1 ERAGON	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM		
	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	5 BLOOD DIAMOND	
ATC	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 BLOOD DIAMOND		
	3 ERAGON	4 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX	5 ROB-B-HOOD	
ACC	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 ERAGON	3 BLOOD DIAMOND	4 ROB-B-HOOD
M2	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 KASAL KASALI KASALO		
	3 ROB-B-HOOD	4 BLOOD DIAMOND	5 ERAGON	

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	TOWN
Honda Car Exhibit January 19 to 22, 2007	Power Rangers Space Patrol Delta (SPD) Meet & Greet Event January 21, 2007
ASALA CENTER	MARKET! MARKET!
Live Remote Broadcast of Miss Cebu Coronation Night January 18, 2007	Movie Breakfast Carnival Event January 6 to 7, 2007

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THANKSGIVING

RINMENT
o for Paula Abdul

...45, who is in the ...ocess of adopting a 1-...by from Malawi, was ...adoption groups have ...ng her celebrity status ...ions about foreigners ...m Malawi.

...fused criticism last ...

...ENCOURAGE: Unicef National Ambassador Aliwan this ...ng during a performance for Typhoon Reming victims ...ar Elementary School in the province of Albay on ...e also faced drastic many times," Gary said. "But I ...ve now to say that there is hope."

Roundup

ics' Awards winners

...SUNDANCE, California—"LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE," ...ntertaining story about family dysfunction, and the ...ical "Dreamgirls," had winners at the 12th annual Cri... Choice Awards.

...ch films earned four awards on Friday night, al... "The Departed" and Jennifer Lopez pictures, but Lopez ...ed best director.

...ttle Miss Sunshine" stars Joe Nowa acting ensemble, ...ung actress for Abigail Breslin, best young actor for ...mas and best writer for Michael Arndt.

...ie Murphy and Jennifer Hudson of "Dreamgirls" ...ed honors in the best supporting actor/actress cate... The film also earned an award for best soundtrack, ...e Beyonce won for best song for "Listen."

...ren Mirren, for her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II in ...Queen," earned the best actress nod, Forest Whitaker ...ham actor for "The Last King of Scotland."

...ce,' 'Borat' vote

...ANGELES—Gritty drama "Babel" and mock-hit com... "Borat" were named among the nominees for the ...rs Guild of America awards here Thursday.

...the best original screenplay category, Guion-Jagerful ...d" was named alongside quirky comedy "Little Miss ...shine," British royal drama "The Queen," "Will Ferrell's ...ally Strange Data Fiction" and "United 93" about the ...fated September 11, 2001.

...ence: Cultural meetings of minds to be held ...ual Nations of Enrichment" was the standout nomi... in the best adapted screenplay category.

...e good documentary classic the journey across ...ds of a fictional Mandarin Isaiah journalist. It was ...ed alongside "The Departed," "The Devil Wears Pra... "Little Children" and "Thank You for Smoking," AFP

...n't Know That'

...ational Geographic Channel's "I (Ain't) Know That" ...ises a look at the science behind ordinary items, from ...ge to tea bags, toothpaste to tea and condoms to ...s behavior.

...Channel scientists and presenters Jonny Phillips and ...ael Anderson also dive upon everyday objects like ...on TVs to see how they work. The series airs Saturdays at 8 p.m.

...anger Than Fiction'

...anger Than Fiction," a comedy about taking the life ...ture and making it the one you've always wanted, ...e chosen soon exclusively at Ayala Malls Cinemas ...ritis 4 and Greenhills 21.

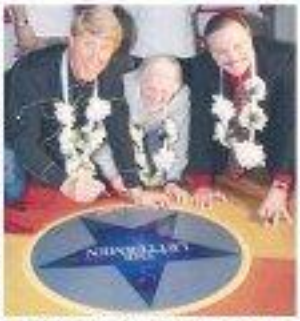
...ected by Marc Forster, the film stars Will Ferrell, Em... Thompson, Dustin Hoffman, Maggie Gyllenhaal and ...n Lithgow.

...ter Inside Erick Darnell) hears a female voice ...ing his every actions, thoughts and feeling in detail. ...hen the voice declares that he is facing imminent ..., Darnell realizes he must find out who is writing his ... and persuade her to change the ending.

...milya Channel

...gandaya Channel, the newest channel in TFC Direct, ...resses the best of ABS-CBN classics from "Mutya ...ng Gamot" and "Ilan Ilan Presents" to "Gusto Ko ...," "Maagap Ang Sayuan sa Kinabuan" and "Ulan ...Chicks."

...e is an hour programming was designed to suit the ...ly viewing habits of TFC viewers in North America, ...ia, Europe and the Middle East.



THE LITTLEMEN...Mark Prosser, Tony Berala and Donovan Tor—looking happy to be back in the Philippines, sign their star at the Araneta Coliseum Walk of Fame before their concert on Friday.

...duped her into signing a model... album deal with his label, only to deprive the singer of her rights under the recording agreements by failing to send her accounting statements and by lying about deals he had made. AP

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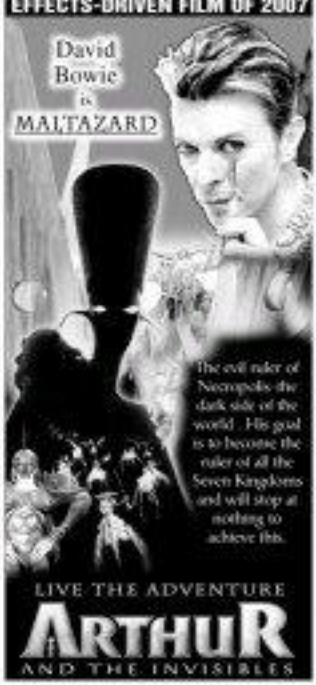

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GALLERIA

1 ERAGON – THX
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 ERAGON
5 ROBIN HOOD
6 MANO PO
7 GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
9 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
10 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8

ERMITA

1 ERAGON
2 GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX
3 BLOOD DIAMOND
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
5 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
6 ROB-B-HOOD
7 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
Sneak Preview

METRO EAST

1 GRIFFIN AND PHOENIX
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
4 ROB-B-HOOD
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 8
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
Sneak Preview
7 ERAGON
8 BLOOD DIAMOND

NOVALICHES

1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ROBIN-HOOD
4 KAMASUTRA 3
5 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

PIONEER

1 ERAGON
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
Sneak Preview

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STA. ROSA

1 ERAGON
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview
3 LIGALIG
4 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
5 ROB-B-HOOD

LIPA

1 ERAGON
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 KAMASUTRA 3
4 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
5 ROB-B-HOOD

DASMARINAS

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview
2 ROB-B-HOOD
3 ERAGON
4 KAMASUTRA 3
5 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO

ANGELES

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
2 SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL 8
3 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
4 NIGHT MUSEUM Sneak Preview

IMUS

1 KAMASUTRA 3
2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM Sneak Preview
4 ERAGON
5 ROB-B-HOOD
6 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO

STARMILLS

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
3 ROB-B-HOOD
4 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
5 BLOOD DIAMOND
6 ERAGON

BACOLOD

1 ERAGON
2 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
3 ERAGON
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 3/SHAKE RATTLE
5 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
6 THE RETURN

ILOILO

1 ERAGON
2 KAISAL, KAISALI, KAISALO
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 3
4 THE RETURN
5 KAMASUTRA 3
6 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

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Tale of the MMFF box office: 'Kasal' edges out 'Enteng'

THE TALE OF THE MMFF BOX office isn't limited to the photo-finish tenet of "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" edging out previous film fest frontrunner "Enteng Kabisote" at the cills, P150 million to P125 million.

There is much more to take from the festival's oldest 8 days, which placed "Shake, Rattle & Roll 8" third with P57 million, followed by "Mandirigma ko si Kumin" with P22 million, "Manic Pc 3" with P22 million, "Super Noypi" with P19 million, "Tanging Yaman" with P11 million, "Ligalig" with P7.96 million and "Tadong Batuka" with P5.96 million.

These figures indicate that only three films earned really big bucks during the festival—"Kasal," "Enteng" and "Shake."

"Kamera" P23 million wasn't bad, but it suggested that Gretchen Barretto's big-screen comeback didn't excite viewers as much as expected.

"Manic Pc," at P22 million even with the popular love team of Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez on board, is another underperformer. For it's part, "Super Noypi" had both teen star value and special effects going for it, but its P19 million gross was rather underwhelming.

"Manic Pc" and "Noypi" banked on young star power, expecting to excite and delight the large teen audience—but hoped-for support wasn't forthcoming.

What happened? Did teen viewers opt to go for "Enteng's" out-and-out fantasy and "Kasal's" young-married "dramedy" instead?

If so, that isn't welcome news for the teen and young-adult stars involved, who have raked up bigger hits in the past.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Are they slipping? Do viewers want to see something out of the ordinary in the film fest fare? Whatever the reason, some rethinking at least maybe some mystique is dedicated in order.

As for "Tanging Yaman," its P5.1 million gross suggests that gay camp no longer clicks as moviegoers' fancy. It's been forty years since "Darna" and "Valentina," after all—and Rustom Padilla is cross-dressing Dolphy's pale shadow.

Gener Mamaradlo's psycho-thriller, "Ligalig," barely scraped by but the horrors of the lauvel belonged to Lito Lapid's comeback starrer, "Enteng Kabisote," which should tell him a thing or two about the current level of his popularity.

Another relevant conclusion is that today's film fans are no longer carried by established newcomers—or, keep up with the changing movie times, reinvented.

Other possible plausible insights: The chiller/thriller did (as represented by "Shake," "Kamera" and "Ligalig") isn't as hot as it used to be—or, cool it, people.

Heather Lily's movies generally didn't do as well as expected of.

"Tanging" is still doing swimmingly well. But other movie genres like "Shake" and "Manic Pc" appear to have no run of steam. Is it time for them to be sent out of pasture?

'Night at the Museum'

The latest Ben Stiller starrer, "Night at the Museum," is a fun film for the whole family, and will have sneak previews locally today and tomorrow in Metro Manila, Pampanga, Baguio, Laoag and Cebu theaters. In the fun-filled comedy, Stiller plays security guard at the National History Museum who witnesses the museum's primeval beasts and icons come magically to life—as heroic rescuers!

On HGM Channel

Jan. 20 at 9 p.m., "Untamed Heart" with Christina Ricci and Marisa Tomei. Jan. 28 at 6 p.m., "The Mighty Quinn" with Denzel Washington. Jan. 28 at 9 p.m., "A Cry When Secure" with Donald Sutherland and Marlee Matlin.

'Now Is the Time'

Carrying on its tradition of globally relevant music, Deliriums' release with the DVD-CD album, "Now Is the Time (Live at Willow Creek," for 13 tracks of inspiring worship music are complemented by a 70-minute documentary about the band.

'Innocent Voices'

"Innocent Voices," the heart-wrenching true-to-life story of child soldiers in El Salvador, will be shown exclusively at Greenhills 4 and Greenbelt 3 starting Jan. 17. The acclaimed film won the Best Director award at the 2005 Berlin Film Festival.

Cirilo says: "Luis Mandoki has crafted a raw, powerful portrait of childhood (panic in a war zone . . . The images are harrowing . . . The lead child actor has an earnest, visceral presence that lends an almost documentary-style realism to his character's plight."

Gong Li, desperate empress in 'Curse'

GONG LI: China's Greta Garbo

GONG LI HAS BEEN CALLED China's Greta Garbo, and the similarities are obvious.

Like that legendary Swedish actress, she has an almost otherworldly beauty and a remarkable acting range.

Also like Garbo, Gong is an intensely private woman. She rose to prominence in the age of 80 films, like "Red Sorghum" and "Raise the Red Lantern," both directed by Zhang Yimou ("Hero," "House of Flying Daggers").

The duo were ceremonially linked before the turn of the century in 1999, but after their personal relationship ended, so did their film collaborations. Gong worked with other directors and forayed into Hollywood ("Memoirs of a Geisha," "Miami Vice").

After more than 10 years, the duo have reunited for Zhang Yimou (international's "Curse of the Golden Flower."

TAKE FIVE

What was it like working with Zhang again?

It was actually easier than before. We had this strong common goal, to make a really good film. We worked very professionally. It was a wonderful experience.

Since last working with you, Zhang has switched over to the martial arts genre. Have you kept track of his movies?

Yes, I've seen all of his films. Director makes all love martial arts films.

So you were familiar with this play and your character beforehand?

Yes, in college, I was in the play as the character named Jiqiong, not Chrysanthemum.

You've been playing bubbly roles of late. Have you enjoyed switching gears?

I don't think my characters should be categorized as either good or bad, the villain or the heroine. I don't have much interest in performing one-dimensional characters.

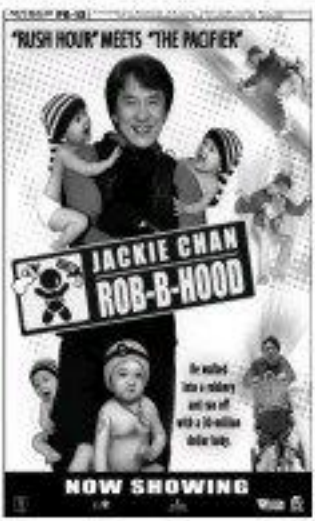
Now that you've been in a few Hollywood films, do you find more comfortable doing them?

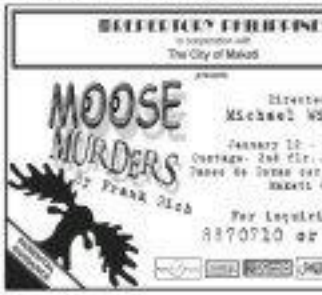
No, it's not a big difference overall. I'm not too worried as long as I know that the director is a good director with a good script and that I can trust he will do a good job with that. Before I agree to do a film, I try to get a chance to really get to know the director and just see what he's going to be doing.

How do you feel about all the Oscar talk and awards buzz that came around every time you do a movie? Do you pay attention to it?

It's good in a sense that people are very interested in the Oscars but you know, there's always pressure for me as if people know who I am. If they like my films, and they think, "Oh, she's a pretty good actress and did a pretty good job," if people feel that way, then that's my real Oscar. I don't really need the statue itself. It's good enough that the moviegoers are impressed.

"Curse of the Golden Flower" opens soon in the Philippines.





Mirren expects 'weird bubble' to burst soon

LONDON—BRITISH ACTRESS Helen Mirren is a firm favorite in the race for top film awards this year, but she expects the "weird bubble" created by critical acclaim for her performance in "The Queen" to burst soon.

Although the Mirren, 61, has left it late to make a splash in the United States, two successful television roles followed by her portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II have put her center stage in Hollywood and New York.

She is on the Best Actress short list for a Golden Globe, and on Friday added a BAFTA...Britain's top film award—to her list of nominations.

Later this month she will learn if she is in the running for the greatest prize of all, the Oscar—it would be a major surprise if she was not.

Mirren told Reuters by telephone: "I think here in America, because I had three pieces of work that were all incredibly successful and extremely well received . . . suddenly people were 'Who's who? Do this woman exist from?'"

In addition to "The Queen", Mirren won a Best Actress Emmy award in 2006 for television production "Elizabeth I" and has won Golden Globe nominations in the Best Actress in a mini-series category for "Elizabeth I" and "Prime Suspect."

"I'll be perfectly happy when I drop off the stage as well," she said, adding that she was keen to return to the theater stage.

"Who so'ever, the humble hearts and you're back in the nitty-gritty of working. I'm honestly as happy in a total rehearsal room with my paleyrooms cup of tea."

Directed by Stephen Frears, "The Queen" won 10 BAFTA nominations, one ahead of James Bond film "Casino Royale."

Explaining the success of "The Queen," Mirren said: "We are all flawed and ambitious and foolish and spoiled, and we can recognize the human side in everyone."

Mike Collett-White, Reuters

'Charming' was an abused child in real life

SUNICE LAGUSAD

By Nini Valera

THE CEBU ACTRESS WHO PORtrays the malevolent Charming in the GMA-7 prime time soap "Babalong" was an abused child in real life.

Eunice Lagusad, 8, recounted to Inquirer Entertainment in an exclusive interview that last July, her father, a former seaman, barged into their home in Guadalupe, Cebu and began throwing punches at her mother Regina.

"He jumped over the fence and entered our house," Eunice said.

"He began hitting my mother. I tried to stop him, but he pushed me against our washing machine. Then he got a knife and ran after my mother. He stuck the knife against a pillow, my mother was not hurt. But it was a horrifying experience."

That was the last time mother and daughter saw the man.

Regina explained that she never married Eunice's father, a co-worker in a fast food chain. They never even lived together, she said, adding that he had boarded a ship for an unknown destination when Eunice was only seven months old.

He's been trying to reenter to his daughter's life, Regina said. But Eunice ran all other things aside when "Babalong" came and she tried out for a role.

"I wanted to play the young Babalong," said Eunice, who was called to audition at the height of eighteen millayas in September. "I thought that role was for me."

She ended up playing Charming, a character that was cast in the original comic story by Carlo J. Caparas, in which Babalong has only one daughter, Crystal. In the TV version, Babalong has two daughters—the pretty Crystal and the ugly Charming.

What Eunice thought would be a day's taping after she got the role turned out to be two weeks' work.

The sub-plot on Babalong's two daughters was stretched due to overwhelming response from the viewers, who resented to cute nature of Charming and her daily miseries.

Spin-off set

Her character has generated such a solid fan base that a spin-off, "Princess Charming," is set to be aired on GMA-7's afternoon block.

As in "Babalong," Charming in "Princess Charming" is ugly—something Eunice doesn't mind at all. "I know I'm not ugly," she said.

Eunice is enrolled in grade 2 of the Immaculate Conception Academy in Toledo, but has to take make-up classes from modules provided by a public school.

"I miss school," she confessed. "But I will not give up my job. It's what I want to do."

The money she earns is handy, she said.

Regina, elected her daughter's earnings are deposited in a bank account. "I don't touch it," said Regina, debunking tabloid reports that the family is totally dependent on Eunice.

But Regina admitted that she had stopped working since Eunice became a regular in the cast. "I could still work," she said, "but my mind would always be on my daughter, especially when she's out taping."

For her part, Eunice would rather have her mom by her side. "I don't know what I'll do without her," she said. "I am just a child."

IndieSine opens Jan. 17 at Robinsons Galleria

THE INDEPENDENT FILMMAKers Cooperative (IFC) announces the regular operations at Robinsons Galleria of IndieSine, a theater dedicated to local alternative movies.

IFC is holding an invitational launch tomorrow at 6 p.m., with pioneers and leaders in the indie film community as guests.

Those booked are the 13 Salaysay founders Ben Pinpin, Pepe Moreno, Joel Reyes, Nick de Ocampo, Raymond Red, Rox Ius, Tikoy Aguiluz, Mike de Leon, Mario O. Flores and Sid Catigpot and Mabi de Leon.

The full-length feature, "Buhay Bilyon ng Bubi," directed by Gerard Acosta, opens the IndieSine launch. As such, "Bubot," 2006 Grand Prize winner of the Cinema Originals starts flogging Jan. 17 with daily festival hours.

Big name of the scene talked about indie movies in the last year.

IndieSine offers regular commercial runs and festivals throughout the year. Its mission programming includes an interesting mix of alternative films new and old, experimental and genre-busting titles, both multi-awarded and obscure.

The IFC provides services to its members "from production to distribution." It is mainly a support and network system for indies who need help with their movies. All practitioners who have worked in an indie film production can apply for membership.

IFC is the short version of Philippine Independent Filmmakers Multi-purpose Cooperative.

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"This is one of the year's best films!"
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"BRILLIANT"
Stranger than Fiction

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Extended viewing

TEENICE HOUSE ON MOCKINGBIRD HILL must be running for two hours instead of one.

This will create regular features like "Friday and Josh," "Tony 101," "Runners," "All That" on Mondays to Thursdays and "Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide," "Unfabulous" and "Naturally Sadie" on Fridays to Sundays.

The extended viewing hours begin from Jan. 22 to 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

On Jan. 26, TEENick also launches "Life with Derek," a new show featuring two teenagers who become siblings when their parents get married. It airs Fridays and Saturdays, 8 p.m.

Cartoon series

KID FIT

Petty, a newly-hatched chick, and his bird friends, Chirp the robin and Quack the duck, explore their park surroundings and learn about basic scientific concepts such as shadows, gravity and seasons.

"Drop into the Big Blue World," an educational series, premieres this month on Cartoon Network.

Weekdays at 10:30 a.m., watch all-new episodes of "The Pingu Show" in a new format.

Pingu is a cheeky, adorable penguin. The show follows the penguin's adventures with family and friends in the South Pole.

"Thomas the Tank Engine" continues this month with new adventures of Thomas and the hardworking transport vehicles of the Isle of Sodor, including new engines joining the crew.

The series airs weekdays, 10:45 a.m.

Bugs Bunny back

Nickelodeon starting Jan. 20 at 2:30 p.m. are for new episodes of "Kids Pelly Antiques."

The routine set of host and Fossil returns as their wonderful (to the world) but terrible taken them to new exotic locales and encounters of intricate kind.

The new hour, premiering Jan. 20 at 2:30 p.m., features the two most famous Looney Tunes characters – Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck.

The hilarious duo begins gags and dispels it humor weekends from 4 to 5 p.m.

"Power Rangers Dino Thunder" is back with a new team, forward on Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.

The series also weekdays, 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. starting Jan. 26th.

"HOW PLUFFY ADVENTURE"

ACTOR won nine Oscar winner proud to be American? Denzel Washington's answer: "I didn't vote for George Bush. If that's what you really want to know."

A Déjà view of Denzel Washington

By Jane Susan R. Nicolas
Contributor

LOS ANGELES—"DO YOU GUYS HAVE figured out all the problems of the world?", a beaming Denzel Washington asked as he walked into a hotel room, casually dressed in a black, long-sleeved shirt and denim pants.

The two-time Oscar winner, who appears as Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) agent Doug Carlin in the action-thriller "Déjà Vu," radiated warmth and humility as he proceeded to answer our questions. He broke into his infectious hold and exclaimed laughter when he found something amusing.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Produced by blockbuster master Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Tony Scott ("Crimson Tide," "Man on Fire"), "Déjà Vu" tells the tense tingling story of how an agent, who falls in love with a stripper, goes back in time using high technology to save his beloved's life.

Asked if he ever had a déjà vu moment (the familiarity of a smell, sight or sound that causes us to confuse past with present) in a split second), Denzel replied, "Yes, I have. One day I got my mail and I just stood there for a while thinking somebody would drive by. And true enough, Eddie Murphy drove by and talked to me."

Big question

If he had a chance to go back in time to change something, what would it be?

"I don't have to give this a month to think about it," Denzel replied. "There are things I have to say. I'm thinking, if I have to say something personal, really close to your heart, (like, I would like to change slavery). But then I have to ask myself which slavery? Slavery today? In Egypt? Or in Africa? And which time frame? So there are a lot of things to think of before I do that."

The film shows advanced visual surveillance tools (so what Denzel calls "spying technology") at that time, including "satellites and drones, watch human traffic at airports and reconstruct criminal activities. "Déjà Vu," according to Denzel, adopted technology that is already being used today.

"We already have this kind of technology," he pointed out. "There are actually cameras that can look inside a building and see what people are doing. How do I feel about it? I don't ask me because I have been surveyed a long time ago. Welcome to the life of celebrity!"

Dream come true

"But to be accurate, they need your SSN or your generic information to be able to distinguish you from the other people in the room or else it will simply come out as a bunch of people moving."

Also starring Val Kilmer, Jim Caviezel (Jesus in Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ") and newcomer Paula Patton, "Déjà Vu," according to Denzel, is "a very bizarre love story."

"It is unusual," he described the film. "Wouldn't it be interesting if you meet someone and you get to look at four days of your life before you meet that person? It is a very interesting love story."

The lovely Paula, whom an interviewer separately described working with Denzel as "a dream come true,"

told Paula: "Working with Denzel really made me think of that feeling of déjà vu because I immediately felt comfortable working with him and we connected immediately."

Denzel and Paula's chemistry onscreen is so strong you would think they have known each other for a long time.

"Paula has a lot of energy," Denzel said. "She brings this excitement and innocence onscreen. And that is really refreshing. Your head has a good eye. He was like one who highly recommended her to me. He is right. Though, Paula has innocence, warmth, and excitement and more beauty that you just want to protect."

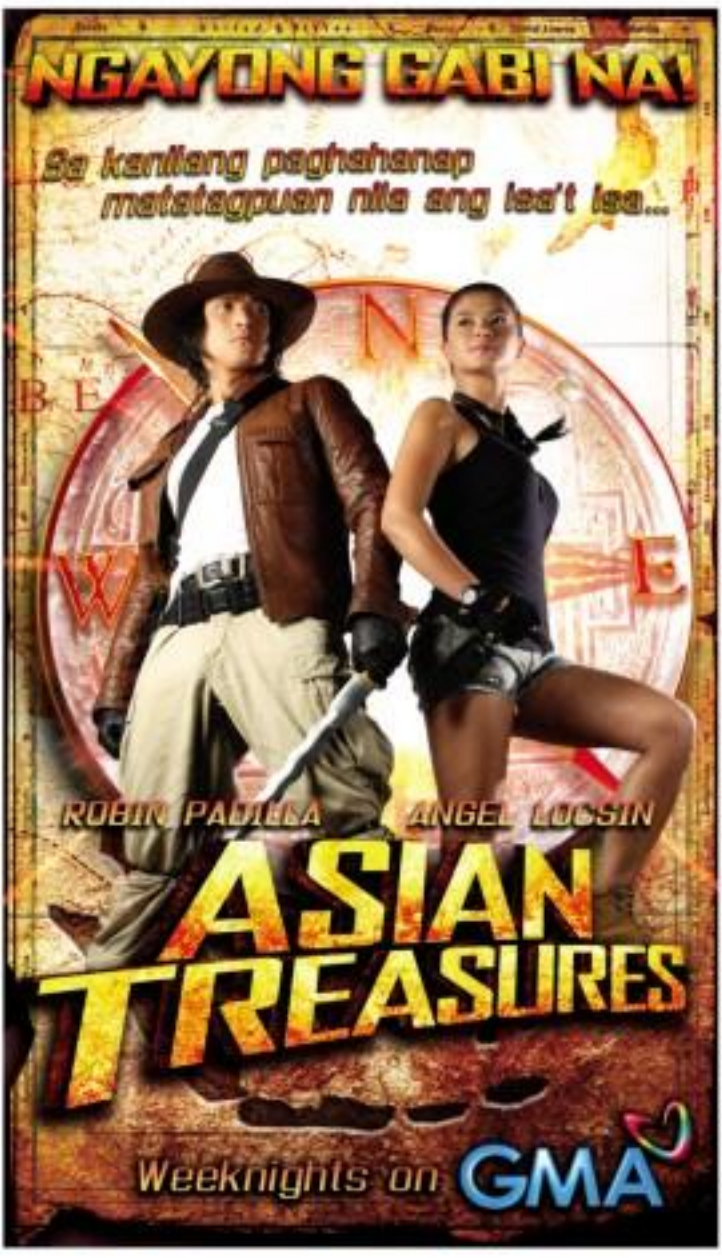
Devastation as setting

It was Denzel's idea to continue filming in New Orleans even after Hurricane Katrina hit the city. The film was already in pre-production then.

"I am happy to be a part of helping get New Orleans back on its feet," he said. "What the community experienced was overwhelming devastation and to the credit of this downtrodden, you see these old ladies cleaning outside their homes and trying to make everything go back to normal. People were happy because they got jobs when we continued filming over there. I went around and I saw people come up to me and want to talk. You just have to listen. People were frustrated and angry and I was there to listen to their stories."

Denzel continued: "What happened in New Orleans reminded me of our responsibilities as human beings. Sometimes, it is not enough to simply give money or to just raise buildings because those events cannot get back everything they have lost. Some of them never look, ing for a pair of glasses, a photograph, anything to remind them of what their lives used to be. It was a sad time and at the same time very inspiring. I actually spoke to a group of college kids and they were very enthusiastic to build their schools and go back to their classrooms. They were ready to do anything to build their neighborhood."

Is he proud to be an American now?

"I didn't vote for George Bush, if that is what you are asking."

'One day I stood there thinking someone would drive by ... and Eddie Murphy did'